WORLD / A22
Ex-New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani joins White House race

METRO / A19
NBI to subpoena another Leviste employee

NEWS / A2
Press freedom in Asia repressed in '06; RP, Afghanistan deadliest, US media group says

NEWS / A2
SC dismisses Nicole petition questioning VFA provision on US custody

Anti-fat underwear now on sale but jury still out

PARIS—UNDERWEAR that helps women slim down and runs heat cool and fresh—purveyors of cosmetic-textiles were out in force at Paris' annual lingerie trade fair on Sunday.

DAYS FAIR A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, February 7, 2007 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 61 P18 www.inquirer.net

Orbiting junk in space reaches critical mass

FOR DECADES, SPACE EXPERTS HAVE WORRIED that a speeding bit of orbital debris might one day smash a large spacecraft into hundreds of pieces and start a chain reaction, a slow cascade of collisions that would expand for centuries, spreading chaos through the heavens.

In the last decade or so, as scientists came to agree that the number of objects in orbit had surpassed a critical mass—or, in their terms,

CONTINUED, A13

Villar snubs GMA ticket

Lacson says coalition with UNO a done deal

By Juliet Labog Javellana and TJ Burgonio

WITH SENATORIAL ASPIRANTS criss-crossing party lines days before the deadline for the filing of their certificates of candidacy, Senate President Manuel Villar ruled out the possibility of his running under the administration ticket.

The reelectionist senator, who heads the chamber that has been at odds with President Macapagal-Arroyo, said he would either be with the opposition slate or with a third or middle force he was still trying to form with fellow senators eligible to run for another six-year term.

"I'm either joining a middle force or UNO," he told the Inquirer Monday, referring to named President Joseph Estrada's United Opposition, which has so far announced eight candidates for the 12

PILLAR A10

CALL CENTER, SULU STYLE
A member of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 9 checks his cell phone for messages/missed calls in the only spot where cellular signals can penetrate Barangay Bandon, Patikul, Sulu. (See Across the Nation, Page A-4.)

General finally admits he was MNLF hostage

By TJ Burgonio

AFTER DAYS OF STUBBORN DENIALS by Malacañang, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino yesterday publicly admitted he and his 22-member peace mission had been taken hostage by fighters of the Moro National Liberation Front.

"In the strictest sense of the word, we were hostaged because we were prevented from leaving the camp," Dolorfino told members of the Commission on Appointments (CA) during his confirmation hearings.

"We were in a situation in which we had no other choice but to stay," he said.

This was the first time that the head of the military's National Capital Region Command made the admission after he and his companions were freed Sunday from two nights of detention at an MNLF camp in Penamucan, Jolo island, Sulu.

Prior to Dolorfino's statement before the CA, Malacañang and the military leadership had painstakingly denied that Dolorfino and his companions had been taken hostage by the MNLF, insisting that they were in the camp at the MNLF's "invitation" or "request."

Dolorfino made the admission during the CA hearing called to confirm his promotion to major general.

Until yesterday, Dolorfino had preferred using his prior rank of brigadier general.

GENERAL A4

SC rules vs doc, hospital over patient's death

THE SUPREME COURT HAS AFFIRMED a Court of Appeals decision finding the owner of Medical City General Hospital and a member of its surgical staff liable for the death of a patient as a result of complications arising from two pieces of gauze being left in her body during an operation.

The high court found Dr. Miguel Antpil liable for "medical negligence," and said the contention of Professional Services Inc. (PSI), the hospital owner, that it could not be held liable for his error did not stand.

It likewise upheld the awarding of more than P5 million in damages to the family of Natividad Agana, who died in 1986, two years after the surgery.

SC RULES A11

GMA allies in House vote to suspend Cayetano

By Michael Lim Ubac

AFTER MORE THAN FIVE HOURS OF A tumultuous hearing, allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo slapped a 45-day suspension on House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano for allegedly unfairly accusing the First Family of secretly maintaining millions of dollars in a German bank.

Voting 30-3-1, the administration-dominated House committee on ethics and privileges chastised the opposition stalwart for what it deemed to be "improper conduct and unparliamentary behavior."

Cayetano, who is gunning for a Senate seat in the May elections, said the committee ruling had yet to be approved by two-thirds of the plenary before it could be carried out.

While three opposition lawmakers sided with Cayetano—Representatives Rafael Mariano, Rolo Golez and Teofisto Guingona III—a lone congressman, Agapito "Butz" Aquino, abstained from the voting.

"I don't want to have a part in this harassment," said Aquino.

The vote came after Cayetano refused to present evidence although he had been given two days by the committee to do so, said administration lawmakers.

Instead of presenting evidence, Cayetano had asked to be allowed to

GMA ALLIES A10

Asia now one of world's fastest growing millionaires' clubs

SINGAPORE—WITH ROBUST economic growth turning Asia into one of the world's fastest-growing millionaires' clubs, Asian workers are expected to enjoy the highest pay hikes on the planet this year, a survey showed yesterday.

Private bankers have been flocking to the region, and banks such as Merrill Lynch/Capgemini list that the wealth of Asian millionaires may hit $30.6 billion in 2010.

"There is too much money chasing after too few managers, so companies have to throw more money at their managers to get them to stay," Lee Quaner, ECA's Hong Kong-based general manager, told Reuters.

The other factors expected to benefit Asian workers aside from economic growth are talent shortage and lower inflation, according to the results of a survey by human resources firm ECA International, which compared 45 countries.

The world's top 10 countries with the highest forecasted "real" wage increases in 2007 are, in chronological order, India, Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Thailand, Slovakia, South Korea, Malaysia, Egypt and Russia.

Real wage increases, which represent workers' annual salary rises after taking inflation into account, are expected to climb an average 3.6 percent in Asia this year—a 50-percent jump from 2.4 percent in 2006.

Salaries for Asian workers may get a bigger boost because Asian economies are growing faster than the supply of talent—especially for senior managers—and because falling inflation rates are lifting purchasing power, Quaner said.

The survey said workers in India were set to enjoy the sharpest jump in real wages across the globe this year at 7 per-

ASIA NOW A6

OLD FRIENDS. President Arroyo and PDI Chair Mariel R. Prieto, meet at the launching on Monday of "Negosyo," a book about 50 inspiring entrepreneurial stories at the residence of Joey Concepcion, presidential consultant on entrepreneurship.

Fil-Ams to invest P150M in AFP bank 'for heroes'

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE LARGEST ORGANIZATION OF Filipinos based in North America will invest P150 million in Centennial Savings Bank, owned by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in a bid to transform it into a facility for "tried and loving heroes."

In a statement, CSB announced that it had recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Filipino Foundation for International Brotherhood, or Equation, for the organization's investment in the bank this year.

The capital buildup is in line with CSB's intention to launch new products and technologies that would transform the bank into "a major service provider to overseas Filipinos and the men and women of the Armed Forces."

FIL-AMS A6

A2
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2007

6/42 Sun Cargo 6 26 | 1 6 2 0 5 4
Pacific SUBASTRA Evening 6 0 3 | 7 5 8
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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern sections of Luzon and Visayas will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Cotabato/Davao	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Dagupan/Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo	Partly Cloudy
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rain
Clark/Subic	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Puerto Princesa	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Coron	Partly Cloudy	Surigao	Partly Cloudy
Catarman	Partly Cloudy	Dipolog	Partly Cloudy

SC junks 'Nicole' petition vs VFA

By Leila B. Salaverria

DECLARING THE MATTER MOOT, THE SUPREME Court has dismissed the petition of Subic rape victim "Nicole" seeking to invalidate the provision in the Visiting Forces Agreement that prescribes a one-year period for the completion of judicial proceedings against United States servicemen facing criminal charges in the Philippines.

"Consequently, the issue of speedy trial is rendered academic as the one-year period has already lapsed and the trial continues even after the one-year period is now extended," said the high court in an en banc resolution released yesterday.

Four American Marines were accused of raping Nicole at the Subic Freeport in November 2005. Only one of them, Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, was found guilty by a Makati Regional Trial Court in December 2006.

The US Marine was in the country to take part in joint maneuvers with the Philippine military.

In the petition filed in June 2006, Nicole also contested the validity of the VFA provision allowing American servicemen accused of a crime to remain under US custody until the completion of the judicial proceedings against them.

But the Supreme Court did not rule on the matter, saying the issue had been raised in another petition filed by Nicole last month and would be taken up when that petition was discussed.

"The other points raised in the petition referring to the custody of the accused, have relevance only as to denied bonds, are raised by petitioner in a new petition filed before this Court and would thus be more properly addressed in that case," it said.

In questioning the one-year prescription period for the completion of judicial proceedings, Nicole said this is tantamount to grave abuse of discretion committed by the Supreme Court's power to promulgate rules concerning procedures in all courts.

But Nicole's rape case against the US Marines was resolved by the Makati RTC at the "earliest possible time" before the one-year prescription period lapsed, the high tribunal said.

The case was raffled off in the Olongapo City RTC on Dec. 27, 2005, but after a series of judges inhibited themselves from the case, it was transferred to the Makati RTC which presided over the guilty verdict on Smith on Dec. 4, 2006.

Smith's custody while the case is under appeal has been a bone of contention after he was initially held at the Makati City jail following his conviction, but was later ordered out and returned to the US Embassy supposed on Jan. 18 after all four Marines had been detained while the trial was going on.

27th bet claims it's his destiny to do good

By Jerome Aning

A MAN CLAIMING TO BE DESTINED to do good things for the country became the 27th person to file his senatorial candidacy papers at the Commission on Elections yesterday.

"If I am elected, I will change the name of the country to 'The Greatest Land' and you (the Filipinos) will be called 'Pa-Greatest People' as a symbol of your freedom," said Victor "Ernesto" Jimon.

He said that slavery remained because the country still carried the name of Spain's King Philip II. Renaming the Philippines would signify emancipation from the country and its people, he said.

Jimon said his platform was "ultimate democracy," for which there is no model because he would serve as that model rather than be what scholars excel.

Detained Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes, the 26th this way tackled like a movie star when he was released from prison yesterday to the end file his candidacy papers.

COUP SUSPECT TO CANDIDATE. Navy officer Antonio Trillanes, detained on coup charges, shows certificate of candidacy after filing his papers at the Comelec.

Trillanes, 35, who is awaiting trial for the failed July 2003 coup, said he would rely on his supporters and on mass media for his campaign.

"I have many supporters, are will launch a joyous campaign all over the country. I will optimize the use of television and communication technology in my campaign," he told reporters.

Trillanes said he has "volunteer contacts" composed of relatives, friends and supporters in 77 provinces.

He said he would use the Internet, text messages, television and radio.

Trillanes said running for senator was "the only way through which I can counter the hardline corruption and fight for the common welfare."

"I have not been killed by the kind of politics that we have and that makes me an ideal catalyst for change," he added.

Trillanes did not indicate what party nominated him or if he would be running as independent, saying "for filing later" on his papers.

His lawyer Reynaldo Robles said that if Trillanes is not drafted by the United Opposition, he would run as an independent. With Bella Simbun

Camarines gov cleared of graft raps

By Norman Bordadora

THE SANDIGANBAYAN HAS DISMISSED graft charges against Camarines Norte Governor Tijpons arising from the provincial government's alleged non-payment of P15 million worth of fertilizers and farm equipment delivered to the province in 2001.

The antigraft court said the case against Tijpons did not constitute graft but "a simple case of non-payment" involving an ordinary contract of purchase and sale.

It said the complainant was making the court his collecting agent. "They are well out of line," the Sandiganbayan said.

The case stems from a complaint filed by Modesto Sitoy-Sitoy, alleged head of his community-run private cooperative for fertilizers, furniture and farm equipment it delivered to the provincial government in 2001.

The Ombudsmen found probable cause and charged Tijpons.

The Sandiganbayan created a division of five justices to handle the case after the Second Division chaired by Associate Justice Edilberto Sandoval failed to come up with a unanimous decision.

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ASIAN '06 RANKING

RP, Afghanistan most deadly for journalists

HONG KONG—THE PHILIPPINES AND Afghanistan were the most dangerous places for journalists in Asia in 2006, while the media in Thailand suffered under a new military government and dozens of reporters remained behind bars in China, a US media rights group said Tuesday in its annual report.

"We look at most countries in Asia, and we see a real step backward," said Robert Dietz, Asia coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists. "Things don't look good. We don't see any positive trends."

The New York-based group said the Philippines and Afghanistan had the highest journalist deaths in the region last year. With three deaths each, the two countries ranked globally only behind Iraq, where 32 journalists were killed in 2006.

Other Asian flashpoints were Pakistan and Sri Lanka, where an escalating civil conflict continued to threaten the lives of reporters, the group said. Two journalists were killed in Pakistan last year, while Sri Lanka recorded one such death, it said.

Thailand saw a great setback in press freedom in 2006, when a military coup immediately increased pressure on journalists, Dietz said.

Shortly after the military took power in September, it shut down hundreds of community radio stations and censored foreign broadcasters about the coup.

"A year of political turmoil climaxed in a military coup that accelerated the downward trend of Thailand's press freedom climate," the group's report said.

Worldwide, 55 journalists were killed in direct connection to their work in 2006, Dietz said. Another 16 deaths were being investigated to determine whether they also were linked to the journalists' work.

Meanwhile, the total number of journalists jailed worldwide rose to 134 in 2006—nine more than a year earlier. AP

Another Pinoy seized in Nigeria

PORT HARCOURT—NIGERIAN GUNMEN abducted a Filipino and shot dead the policeman escorting him on the road to Port Harcourt in the oil-producing Niger Delta on Tuesday, a security expert working for a major oil firm said.

The Philippines had ordered its labor department to block workers from going to Nigeria after 24 Filipino seamen were seized on Jan. 20 in the delta, where kidnappings for ransom are an almost daily event. The seamen are still being held in captivity.

"The Filipino was abducted this morning close to Owerri airport on the road to Port Harcourt. Escorts in a van blocked the expat, who had a mobile policeman in his car. They shot and killed the policeman and abducted the expat," the source said.

It was unclear who the Filipino was working for.

Police in Owerri said they had no information about the incident while police in Port Harcourt said they had heard reports of the abduction but had no official confirmation. A Philippine Embassy spokesperson was not immediately available.

Port Harcourt airport has been closed since last August as people traveling to the city by air fly to Owerri and drive from there. The drive takes two to three hours and most foreigners take a police escort.

Violence surged in the Niger Delta last year amid a fuel shortage in the first half of 2007. Tuesday's abduction brings to 39 the number of foreigners being held by different armed groups across the delta.

A British oil production executive from Nigeria, the world's eighth-biggest exporter of crude, has been shut down for a year because of militant attacks on its facilities.

Foreign telecom and construction workers as well as tourists have been targeted. The 24 Filipinos were seized from a German-operated cargo ship on a river in the remote delta. Reuters

Wedding video tags more suspects in Bersamin slay

By Alcuin Papa

THE VIDEO FOOTAGE OF THE wedding attended by Rep. Luis Bersamin just before he was shot dead may hold the key to solving the murder of the Abra congressman.

Criminal Investigation and Detection Group officials yesterday said that based on the video of the Dec. 16 wedding, they have identified more suspects in the Bersamin slay case.

"We reviewed the tape of the wedding and pinpointed additional suspects," said Director Edgardo Tinoy, the CIDG chief.

He said he is consulting with other members of Task Force Bersamin and members of the Bersamin family to identify the people shown on the video footage.

Investigators are particularly interested in persons appearing in the video who are not known to the Bersamin family and who were not invited to the wedding.

"Once we have identified these suspects, we can arrest them. We know for a fact that one of them has a standing warrant for his arrest. So there is some light now," Tinoy said.

Sr. Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, the Quezon City police chief and a member of Task Force Bersamin, said investigators were focusing on persons "acting monstrously" during the wedding.

He said using information from Task Force Abra and the video, they would be able to determine if those persons were rounded before.

Because of the recent violence in the provinces, the Philippine National Police has taken police control of Abra. Task Force Abra, headed by Sr. Supt. Eugene Martin, was sent to enforce the law in Abra, disarm armed groups, arrest violators of the election gun ban and other persons with standing arrest warrants.

Bersamin was shot to death at the Mt. Carmel Church compound on Dec. 16 right after attending the wedding of a niece.

Police have identified four suspects—Rufino Pascoy, Freddie Dupo, Dominador Barbero and Jimmy Tacolao. Based on witnesses' accounts, there are two more unidentified suspects in the killing.

Pascoy, who was arrested a few days after the murder, implicated Dupo, a former vice mayor of La Paz, Abra, and Abra Gov. Vicente Valera in the murder of Bersamin.

He said Dupo had told him before the murder that Valera had put up P5 million for the murder of Bersamin. Pascoy said Dupo was recruiting him to join the hit team.

But Pascoy later withdrew his confession. He is still under police custody.

Valera has denied Pascoy's claims.

'Sleeping with the enemy' an eye-opener for gov't exec

By Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO CITY—FOR RAMON Gonzes, sleeping with the "enemy" meant a chance to have a deeper understanding of the Moro struggle in the south.

Gonzes, undersecretary at the Office of the Presidential Adviser in the Peace Process, was one of 22 members of a peace mission detained in a Moro National Liberation Front camp in Bituan, Basilan, for two nights last weekend.

"I realized that these people are willing to lay down their firearms provided their security is guaranteed," Gonzes said of the person-to-person talks he had with MNLF subcommanders, village leaders, women, youth and children.

"They are very much willing to leave their firearms behind, provided that shelter, education and health care [services] are delivered," Gonzes added.

While inside the MNLF camp, Gonzes said he was able to move around freely, holding consultations for "social data gathering" as part of a government plan to hold a workshop with the local folk.

"It's an initial step for social preparations that allows us to adjust to their pace. We have [our] pace and they cannot cope with our pace of communication planning," Gonzes said.

New ways

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza said the weekend incident of kind new approaches to community planning.

"NEVER FORGET TO BRING YOUR TOOTHBRUSH," Undersecretary Ramon Santos (at right) says about his detention and that of his fellow peace mission guerrillas inside the MNLF camp.

HOSTAGED BUT HOSTED: Maj. Gen. Dolorfino answers questions from the members of the Commission on Appointments about his detention at the MNLF camp over the weekend. Yes, he was in fact held hostage but at the same time was treated like a special guest, he says.

"I look at it as an opportunity and not a challenge," Dureza said.

He said programs lined up for implementation in Jolo included security of a joint media information office, organizing women and children into a 500-client small Daughters for Peace group, and setting up of a concrete peace-monitoring structure.

Road map to development

Maj. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino, who led the peace mission, said that was the same goal for the province outlined in his paper, "Sulu Road Map, A Journey to Peace and Development."

Dolorfino said the road map is needed to correct errors of the past.

Job must be finished

"No stakeholders, we need to correct past not just by ignoring the root causes [of the conflict] but leaving them as well the walls that divide us," Dolorfino said in his Road Map to Peace presentation.

Sayyaf agitated.

"Many events, many causes, are need to clear that Mr. are now building a road widening away from violence," he said.

Nguyen and Dolorfino have asked Dureza to allow them to continue what they had started in Sulu.

"Peace cannot be achieved overnight. I want to assure them," Dolorfino said.

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MNLF willing to lay down arms if other armed groups are also disarmed

By Jeoffrey Maitem and Julie Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—A TOP OFFICIAL OF THE Moro National Liberation Front said yesterday MNLF guerrillas would lay down their arms only if the government disarmed all militias and the private armies of politicians.

MNLF Secretary General Ibrahim Sema denied that "terror is impossible" the proposal by presidential adviser Jesus Dureza for the MNLF and other groups to give up their weapons in a step towards genuine peace in Mindanao.

"But we welcome the proposal. That matters is good for discussion," he said.

Sema said the issue of disarmament had been discussed before but nothing happened.

"This is not new. We will only lay down our guns if the government will also disarm militias and private armies," Sema said.

He said disarming militias and private armies would help ensure there would be no more abuses against civilians. If that happened, there would be no need for MNLF members to carry guns anymore, he said.

The 1996 peace agreement between the government and the MNLF is silent on the issue of disarming the guerrillas.

The disarmament proposal encouraged other MNLF forces in Sulu held hostage for two nights last weekend a 22-member government team led by Maj. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino and Peace Undersecretary Ramon Santos. (Story on Page A1.)

Tripartite talks

Interviewed on ABC network, Dureza said the country could only achieve real peace in Mindanao when there were no longer loose firearms in the region.

Dureza said disarmament should include not only the MNLF but others as well.

"We are joking here, feeling ourselves if we say that there's going to be unshakable peace [even if there is] a proliferation of high-powered offensive weapons," Dureza added.

Dureza said the government should take up the matter during proposed tripartite talks with the MNLF and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Only 'a dream'

"They say it's a dream but for me, we have to address that," he said.

Datuda Hidser Malik, spiritual adviser of the MNLF band that detained Dolorfino's peace-desired emergency in the Basilan, that mission was paid for the release of the group.

"The reports are so erroneous," he said in Filipino.

Malik said the government party had gone on the MNLF camp to organize a settlement with the families of 13 MNLF members slain in a Jan. 30 clash in Barilid.

Seminar for media people

"Among Christians, that is called shalay (donation). For us here, that is financial assistance. That is not ransom," Malik said.

Malik said if the financial assistance—variously reported to range from P500,000 to P900,000—would be cause for another problem, they were willing to return it.

Malik suggested that some journalists be given a seminar on the culture of the Tausugs so they would become more circumspect in their reporting. With a report from Christine O. Avendaño

General finally admits . . .

From page A1

Deputy Ombudsman's testimony at the CA, retired Navy spokesperson Lt. Col. Ret. Salome Barsaga took to the tallest line that the peace mission was not taken hostage.

"It was not a hostage-taking situation," he said.

Barsaga got in touch with Dolorfino after the general's appearance before the CA, and said the two "are still in touch" as of last contact. He was asked if it was a hostage-taking. He said it depends on the one looking at the incident."

Dolorfino, however, was quick to tell CA members that there were circumstances during their detention that indicated he and his team were being merely "hosted" by the MNLF.

"There are other elements to (show) that we were just hosted because we were treated well," the Marine general said.

Crime of coercion

"[MNLF commander] Ustadz Malik was very apologetic ... He favored us a lot of food. When I heard the sight of [missiles that they were slaughtering a cow, I sensed that we would be released the following day."

The CA defense committee, chaired by Rep. Judith Jane Hernandez, later recommended to today's plenary the approval of Dolorfino's appointment to major general, as well as the promotion of 13 other officers.

At his own confirmation hearings, Secretary Emil Gonzalez said the Justice Secretary had already set aside the crime of coercion, but stressed that this charge will be pursued if only to preserve the gains of the 1996 peace agreement with the MNLF.

"Strictly speaking, when there was an admission that they were hostaged, that means that there was at least the crime of coercion that was committed, or illegal detention because that was for more than three days," Gonzalez told reporters after the hearing.

Caution needed

"But, considering that things have sort of normalized now and (there's nobody) complaining about it, I don't think there is a need to pursue that because that would only place a wrinkle on the peace process," he added.

The CA committee on justice deferred consideration of Gonzalez's appointment pending submission of documents by an opponent, Manila assistant prosecutor Peter Co, who claimed Gonzalez was unfit for the post because of his inconsistent statements on some cases.

Dolorfino himself said it would be unwise for the government to take retaliatory action against the MNLF because this might jeopardize the tactical cooperation with the former rebel group.

Fight on two fronts

"I believe there's a very high national interest in this," Dolorfino told CA members. "We are burning our bridges [over] Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah, and it took us a very hard time to destroy the ... unholy alliance between [them]."

"If we announce a retaliatory action against the MNLF in Sulu, we will go back to square one, in which it will be easy for us to operate because there will be two groups we will be coordinating in that island," he said. With a report from Dona Pazzibugan

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Pentagon gang behind Cotabato jailbreak, says MILF

COTABATO CITY—THE BARON the North Cotabato provincial jail in Kidapawan City last Friday that resulted in the escape of 48 inmates was carried out by the Pentagon gang and not the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the MILF said yesterday.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said the group had received information that Monir Tatak, one of the Pentagon gang's leaders, had led the raid.

Around 25 heavily armed men stormed the jail in order to spring four inmates suspected of involvement in the 2003 Kidapawan bombing. In the process, the other inmates were able to escape.

Of the escapees, only one has been recaptured.

The military had previously claimed it had killed Tatak in an attack on a Pentagon hideout in the Liguasan Marsh in 2004.

The Pentagon leader, who is a diabetic, turned out to be alive, Kabalu said.

"It only shows that we had nothing to do with the jailbreak," Kabalu said.

He said the Pentagon raided the jail to free a close friend of Monir's. He did not identify the prisoner, however.

He said the MILF was helping the government track down the escapees as part of its commitment to the peace process.

"Our troops have been mobilized to track them," Kabalu said.

But Lt. Col. Julius Anito, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said the military still believed Monir had been killed in the Liguasan Marsh in 2004.

Catholic priests kidnapping

"But we are looking into allegations that Monir and his men were involved in the raid," Anito said.

The Pentagon, blamed for at least 30 abductions in Mindanao, gained notoriety after it kidnapped Catholic priests in central and western Mindanao.

One of them is considered now (Italian priest Fr. Giuseppe Pierantoni on Oct. 17, 2001), while he was officiating a Mass in Ilomavis, Zamboanga del Sur.

The group also kidnapped five Chinese engineers working on a government irrigation project in North Cotabato and their Filipino guide in May 2001.

Four of the Chinese engineers were killed in the crossfire during a military rescue operation in June of that year.

Shoot-to-kill orders

Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon, meanwhile, has issued shoot-to-kill orders against the escapees who resist arrest.

"By provisions of the law, they can be subjected to object's arrest. For our law enforcement, we will apply the full force of the law," Calderon told reporters.

When asked if the recent recapture who resisted would be shot, Calderon said, "Common sense (That's basically it.)"

Several of the inmates had cases involving heinous crimes.

North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Pifiol has put up a P125,000 reward for the capture of each inmate. He also appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo to be the prison break. The jail is under the supervision of the local government.

'Laudable act'

Pifiol said he would also seek a investigation of the bombing charges against Kule Mantagung, a detained MILF leader who refused to join the jailbreak.

Pifiol said Mantagung's refusal to join the escapees "was a laudable act that must be given recognition."

"I am innocent of the charges. Why should I flee with them? I will prove my innocence in court," said Mantagung when asked why he did not join the jailbreak.

Calderon said the jailbreak was not connected to the police raid on a hideout of suspected MILF bombers in Tayray, Pifiol, last Thursday.

Police had said the three suspects arrested in the raid—Jinah-ali Orin, Jokanior Orin and Al-muddin Mahalik—were bomb experts belonging to the MILF Special Operations Group that was supposedly sidelining Abu Sayyaf terror group members in Metro Manila.—Edwin D. Fernandez, *AnP*

Fey Mahinay and Hilde Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao; Alexis Pajo in Manila

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MORE THAN 1 BILLION PEOple are expected to join Asia's crammed cities in the next 20 years, where pollution and lack of infrastructure will make their lives miserable unless for effective urban management, the Asian Development Bank said.

Asia faces urban challenges that are unprecedented in history, M. Ramachandran, secretary of India's Ministry of Urban Development, told government officials, experts and donors meeting Tuesday in Manila to discuss massive demographic and social changes in the region.

Asia's cities account for half the world's urban dwellers, with a combined population of 1.36 billion that is expected to reach 2.8 billion in 21 years, Ramachandran said. They already are grappling with inadequate infrastructure and services as well as pressures from globalization and decentralization.

"Although the incidence of poverty has declined in Asian countries, Banks is sustained and robust economic growth ... in recent years, approximately 22-30 percent of urban population live in slums, squatter settlements and substandard housing," Ramachandran said.

On pressure on top cities is manifold: only to half of the total urban households in India, and only to 10 percent of the their households in East Asia, he said.

Ramachandran urged the Manila-based Asian Development Bank to increase its financial participation in urban projects and assist local governments in providing access to funds for urban development.

The ADB and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development—the countries' co-sponsors—proposed establishment of an Asian Cities Development Initiative to "consult and invite officials and handle financing for infrastructure investments. AP

Asia now one of world's fastest growing . . .

From page A1

rose.

Workers in Indonesia and China come in a close second and third, with real wage increases forecast at about 6 percent.

In comparison, salaries for workers in Slovakia may grow by 3.3 percent in real terms this year—the fastest expected pace of growth outside Asia—while American workers may only see their wages inch up 1.2 percent.

"In India, companies are growing, the gross domestic product is growing, so there sounds good reason that people should be earning more," Quano said.

He added that workers in India's business process outsourcing and technology sectors, which had the highest labor turnovers, were likely to see the sharpest wage increases.

Vietnamese workers, on the other hand, may see the lowest pace of real wage growth in Asia in 2007 because of high inflation rate. Reuters

Anti-fat underwear now on sale . . .

From page A1

But opinion was divided on whether high-tech fabrics encapsulating slimming agents, perfumes and creams would be a lasting addition to wardrobes or a passing fad.

"There are a lot of brands that have marked out this idea but there has never been a paradigm shift. What interests consumers in the end are fairly traditional products," said Hubert Lalloz, chief executive of Rasbora, a leading French lingerie firm.

Several companies have proved the technology works and can be a commercial success. Others have since abandoned production.

Philippe Andrieu began his company Orcoco in 2001 with just one product—a pair of tights with a slimming agent in them.

Now he has over 30 garments, including slimming jeans, under the Lynxe trade mark, and annual sales of $5.9 million.

He expects turnover to quadruple by 2009/9, and said the total market could be worth up to about $650 million.

"Midlle is coming, Nike will follow and Chanel is interested," he said. "We have proved it works."

All about well-being

Canadian textiles giant Invista, part of privately held Koch Industries, launched its brand of cosmeto-textiles under the Lycra Body Care trademark two and a half years ago and now has clients around the world, including top men and women's underwear makers and manufacturer of socks and tights.

The textiles—containing also seven melatonin, carnitine derived from seaweed or perfumes—are designed to make people feel fresher and or to help keep skin moist.

"This is all about well-being and emotion rather than providing therapeutic benefit," said Heinz Paul, an Invista spokesperson.

Limited life

Entering cosmeto-textiles contain microscopic capsules of cosmetics that break as the fabric rubs skin, releasing the active ingredients. Invista's capsules come from International Flavors and Fragrances, while Orcinol's are made by French group Robert Blondel SA.

The active life of any garment so treated is between 30 and 50 washes, depending on the ingredient, and—as say disputes—this is the main drawback.

Panties with moisturizer

"We don't promote this product any more, it was our first venture and we learned from it," said Deirdre Urdan on the stand of La Dr International, a Japanese company that launched a line of panties containing a skin moisturizer derived from cactus two years ago.

"We still believe the idea is good but ... I don't think consumers want this yet," he added.

Shaunel chief executive Yves Fadiguette expected perceptions to change in three years when biocapsule-treated sensors have created common units for the sector, which currently has to comply with both cosmetic industry and textile regulations.

At an interim solution, the French industry—which is getting strong government support—will this month launch a quality label to encourage make-up of the technology he said.

Anti-bacteria

Already others have gone further. An Italian company, Bio-Fibres, was promoting a textile containing nano-particles of silver for example, that kills bacteria on skin, among other properties.

"The difference between this material and micro-capsules is that it lasts for life and doesn't release any active substance," said Marketing Adviser Maureen Cermacchi. Reuters

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Fil-Ams to invest P150M in AFP bank 'for heroes'

From page A1

CBS said the entry of the GPW investor group would "further enlist the bank's main objective to be the bank of the real and living heroes, the uniformed men and women and the overseas Filipinos."

"The stakeholders of the bank view this as a very timely move that will maximize the bank's potential," the bank said.

CBS was established in 1998 by the AFP Savings and Loan Association Inc. and the AFP Mutual Benefits Association Inc. to cater to the banking needs of AFP members and retired businessmen. Its main offices are located at Don Francisco Gerigao Street (formerly Emerald Avenue), Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

The thrift bank also has branches in Santa Rosa, Laguna, Villamor Air Base, Camp Aguinaldo and Baguio City.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr., who chairs CBS, recently witnessed the signing of the MOU that signaled the entry of overseas Filipinos as investors. Paul Tinsari and Noli Sarmiento Jr., GPW president and Equestrian secretary general, respectively, signed for their institutions.

1 million members

Founded in 1982, Equestrian is the largest organization of Filipinos in North America with a membership of over 1 million Filipinos and Fil-Americans. The organization links up with other Filipino organizations worldwide, like OFWDirect Foundation, based in the Middle East.

The organization has among its members businessmen, physicians, lawyers, accountants, engineers, nurses, bank and insurance executives, both overseas workers and Filipinos serving in the US military.

The bank said the three-way partnership assured CBS of a "stable financial backbone in the very competitive and challenging thrift banking industry."

"Moreover, the entry of Equestrian paves the way for a more active participation of our overseas workers in the Philippine economy, consistent with the development agenda of the government," the bank said.

Resilient to shocks

Through the years, remittances from OFWs have made the country resilient to shocks that could otherwise slow down growth, wrestle unemployment and put the country's external stability at risk. These inflows, estimated at $14 billion in 2006, are now equivalent to about a tenth of the country's gross domestic product and about 40 percent of the central bank's foreign reserves.

Migration is a way out of poverty for many households while the remittance inflows also effectively provide a buffer for the public sector whose external debts account for over 60 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

The Philippines is also among the countries with the highest gold reserves in the world. Its large pool of expatriates who intend to settle back in the country and could thus become a significant economic force of the future.

A million cases clogging RP courts, says prosecutor

THE JUDICIARY HAS A HUGE backlog of about a million criminal and civil cases, according to the National Prosecution Service, the prosecutor arm of the justice department.

This backlog is symptomatic of the flaws, even the breakdown, of the country's justice system, state prosecutor Geronimo Sy told a House inquiry yesterday into the extra-judicial killings of militants and journalists.

Sy said the blame for the clogged court dockets can be laid at Congress' door for continuing to make laws that have resulted in the country's "over-criminalization."

When faced with a societal problem, the first tendency of legislators is to make it a criminal act, he said. Thus, penalties are imposed for "any little action" or omission. As an example, he cited the criminalization of a curse said in jest or in the heat of an argument.

"Before you know it, all the courts will be dragged with cases," said Sy.

Another example of misplaced legislation is the enactment of the Violence against Women and Children.

"Right now husbands and wives are facing hundreds of criminal cases for what are really family disputes," he said.

He recalled examples in the anti-torture bill passed several months ago by the House, which Sy believes to be superfluous.

Sy said that as far as he could see, the only purpose for passing the law was that Congress wanted to impress the people that it does not condone or tolerate torture of any kind.

"Far from the criminal standpoint, it really does not serve any additional purpose," said Sy, pointing out that the elements of torture were contained in the Revised Penal Code which already has provision for its punishment.

According to Sy, what Congress needed to do was to pass a law that would "bring out penal code and test rules of court up-to-date because parts still using the Australian system ... which does not even define rebellion."

Michael Lim Ubac

Makiling story corrected

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

THIS IS TO CORRECT A PART OF the story "Makiling swallowed: Ish Sandy," published on the front page of the INQUIRER on Oct. 2, 2006.

The article quotes Sofia Toledo as telling this correspondent that her husband had been languishing in jail for five years for the crimes of murder which he allegedly did not commit.

To make both ends meet, Toledo said she worked as a mail lawyer at the public market in Bifian, Laguna.

She said there were the reasons why neither she nor her husband won with their children when a roadside sweep sawy their house in Barangay Bagong Silang, Los Baños at the height of typhoon "Milenyo."

Toledo, who lost three of her children to the landslide which claimed the lives of 11 other people, asked the lawyers to help her seek permission from Laguna Gov. Teresita "Nenita" Lazaro to let her husband visit the wake of their children.

Toledo also sought help to speed up the court hearings on her husband's case.

Court records showed that since the murder case was filed against Toledo's husband in 2001, Judge Maidel Arrabis A. Baloy of branch 36 of the Calamba City Regional Trial Court had consistently held hearings regarding the matter.

In fact, the Toledos have been attending the court hearings on the case.

Toledo's brother-in-law, a co-accused in the murder case, has been acquitted. On Aug. 1, 2006, after Boles moved to end the court hearings, Toledo's counsel even asked for more time to present additional witnesses.

The defense counsel, however, failed to do so and again asked Boles for an extension.

This correspondent had no intention whatsoever to affect the criminal case involving Toledo's husband.

The phrase pertaining to the court case was mentioned just to give the readers a picture of the hard life that the Toledos were experiencing.

The correspondent had no intention to question the credibility of the court and of Judge Boles.

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Guidelines for organ donations eyed

THE GOVERNMENT WILL SOON crafting or guidelines for human organ donations to foreigners, a government official said yesterday.

As present there are no specific rules on organ donations to foreigners.

Much of the trade in human organs, especially kidneys, takes place on the black market.

Health Undersecretary Jaime del Mundo said organ donation was big business in the Philippines, especially among the poor, who sell their kid- neys.

A study conducted recently by the University of the Philippines found that in one slum area in Manila, there were 3,000 men and women who had sold one of their kidneys for P70,000-P120,000.

Saying this weekend, the government will begin a series of consultations with private and public health sector leaders on how to regulate organ donation in the face of rampant, under-the-table trafficin human organs," Del Mundo said.

He said the government was looking at ways of regulating the process by which kidneys were obtained.

A report in a Japanese newspaper recently said that if the system of organ donation were regulated, the Philippines could see a rash of foreign patients, including from Japan, where 10,000 people are currently awaiting kidney transplants.

AFP

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Coco oil symposium today

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF Science and Technology (NAST) will present for the first time the state-of-the-art application of virgin coconut oil in a scientific symposium today at the Traders Hotel on Roxas Blvd., Manila.

The symposium is supported by the private sector, represented by VCO Philippines, and the government, led by the Department of Agriculture, the Philippine Coconut Authority, and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Business owners and government stakeholders are invited to the one-day affair that will start with registration at 8 a.m. Symposium of speakers is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

A session fee of P1,000 covers lunch and coffee break.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, February 7, 2007
5th Week In Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Gen 2:4-9, 15-17
Gospel: Mark 7:14-23

Jesus called the people to him again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and try to understand. Nothing that enters into a person from outside can make that person unclean. It is what comes out from within that makes someone 'un-person-like.'"

Then Jesus got home and was away from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable. "Don't you understand either?" he said. "Do you see not that whatever comes from outside cannot make a person unclean? Since it comes, not the heart but the stomach and it finally passes out."

Then Jesus declared that all foods are clean.

And he went on, "What comes out of a person is what defiles, for out of the heart come out of the heart: theft, murder, adultery, unchaste deeds, covetousness, deceit, indecency, slander, pride and folly. All these evil things come from within and make a person unclean."

Commentary

How similar were of women, though a bit different. After the earth and the dreams, there is a servant on the mind and often comes from—given the heart of life by God breathing into him! And there is a garden for the man to cultivate. In paradise! But he is not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—a warning given.

And Jesus speaks about the heart of man as well—only what comes out of a person can be impure or evil...not what goes in. What we do is what makes us destructive of others and ourselves: what's in the deep recesses of our hearts. It is what we do that makes us impure—the people of saying Heavenly God who is good.

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Supreme Court of the Philippines
Judicial and Bar Council
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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Judicial and Bar Council announces the opening of judgeship positions in the following courts for acceptance of applications:

1. RTC, Br.64 & 140, Makati City
2. RTC, Br.174, Pasay City
3. MeTC, Brs. 4,20 & 39, Manila
4. MTC, Br. 72, Pateros
5. RTC, Br.13, Lipa City, Batangas
6. RTC, Br.90, Lucena City, Quezon
7. RTC, Br.4, Dolores, Eastern Samar
8. RTC, Br.28, Siasi, Sulu
9. MTC, Br. 6, Cagayan De Oro City
10. MTC, Mangatarem, Pangasinan
11. MTC, Urdaneta, Pangasinan
12. MTC, Batangas, Cagayan
13. MTC, Sta. Rita, Pampanga
14. MTC, Sta. Rosa, Laguna

Applications or recommendations must be submitted NOT LATER THAN March 1, 2007 to the JBC Secretariat at 4th Flr. Centennial Bldg., Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila; Tel. Nos. 552-9512 Fax No. 552-9598; e-mail: applications jbc@supremecourt.gov.ph; JBC supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph; Applicants must submit 8 copies of the following:

Application or Recommendation Letter
Personal Data Sheet (JBC Form I-revised-Inside)
from the JBC Website http://jbc.supremecourt.gov.ph)
Picture (2x2)
Certificate of Good Standing or latest Official Receipt from the BIR National Treasurer
ITR for the preceding years
Clearances from NBI, Ombudsman, Office of the Bar Confidant and employer
Transcript of Records
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The JBC also announces that the following are applicants for different judgeship positions:

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The public may submit sworn complaint, written report, or opposition against any of the aforesaid applicants not later than February 17, 2007.

February 6, 2007.

MA. LUISA D. VILLARAMA
Clerk of Court &
Ex-Officio Secretary

ADOPTION CONSCIOUSNESS DAY

DSWD advice: Adopt an orphan, legally

By Cynthia Balana

A TOTAL OF 1,632 ORPHANS PUT UP FOR adoption by the Department of Social Welfare and Development last year have found new homes and families, social welfare secretary Esperanza Cabral reported yesterday.

Cabral, who spearheaded the observance of "Adoption Consciousness Day" on Feb. 3, urged prospective adoptive parents to adopt children through legal means to protect the children from being exploited.

Adopted children, Cabral stressed, have the same rights and duties as the biological children of the adoptive parents, including the right to use the surname of the adoptive family.

Cabral reasons urged prospective adoptive parents to go to a licensed adoption agency to ensure that proper procedures and processes are followed. These processes include counseling, matching or selection, supervised family visit and finalization of adoption. A post-legal phase could also include a search for the roots or birth family of the child and possibly a reunion.

CABRAL

Help desks

The DSWD will also be setting up public "Adoption Help Desks" in popular malls such as those in Alabang Town Center, SM malls in Fairview, Baguio and Manila, and at the Quezon City Memorial Circle. These desks will be manned by DSWD personnel and social workers from private child caring agencies, with volunteer lawyers on hand to answer queries.

She said that legal documents adoptive parents take about nine months or one year, with the lawyer's fee as the major expense.

Intercountry adoptions, on the other hand, take about nine to ten years.

On Feb. 3, the DSWD sponsored activities in observance of "Adoption Consciousness Day" which has been set by Presidential Proclamation No. 752 on the first Sunday of February of every year.

The event was organized to attract public attention to the growing number of orphaned, abandoned or neglected Filipino children in need of an alternative, wholesome family environment.

Other agencies that participated in the event were the Intercountry Adoption Board (ICAB), an inclusive agency of the DSWD; Association of Child Caring Agencies of the Philippines (ACCAP); Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC); Ramon Bakey Foundation (RBF); Foster Care Association of the Philippines (FCAP); Parenting Foundation of the Philippines Inc. (PFPI); and the Adoption Families Foundation (AFF).

The team's observances focused on the theme "Balansing Pag-aampon, Isang sa Pamilya may Pruweksyon," (Proper Adoption: Protection for Children and Families).

Villar snubs offer to run under GMA ticket

From page A1

position majority grabs in the Senate.

Though he did not call for Mr Arroyo's resignation unlike his predecessor Sen. Franklin Drilon, Villar declined to run with the administration over differences in principle. He earlier said he could not run under the ticket of the administration, which has espoused the abolition of the Senate through Charter change.

Villar said he would run independently of any political alliance together with his colleagues—Senators Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto and Francis Pangilinan—who are collectively known as the Wednesday Group.

Villar, listed No. 29 in Forbes magazine's billionaires people in Asia with $1.1 billion in net worth, heads the Nacionalista Party, which counts Recto and opposition Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano as its senatorial candidates.

"We can have four, six or 12 [candidates]," Villar said, adding that this group could be classified as the "principled opposition."

But he said it is one more likely that his group would join a coalition.

"The third force is actually the second force because, come to think of it, there are really only 18 [serious] candidates," Villar said.

Collapse of third force

Sen. Edgardo Angara said the attempt to put up a "third force," a slate of incumbent senators, had collapsed.

"The third force has collapsed. The Wednesday Group may have also collapsed," Angara, head of Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipinas, told reporters.

He said he was consulting with party mates on his decision's offer for him to join the administration's Team Unity ticket.

Villar announced his declaration to run under the opposition ticket just hours before meeting with UNO president and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati on Monday night.

They ironed out kinks in the negotiations for the inclusion of the Wednesday Group in the opposition slate.

Binay went to the Senate on Monday afternoon to meet with Villar but the meeting did not take place then, because sources said Villar and Binay last talked on the Senate floor on Tuesday.

It was not known whether Villar sealed his entry into the opposition ticket during the meeting.

But he told the reporters on Monday afternoon that the Wednesday Group, so-called because it meets every Wednesday, would make the final decision on its plans for the May 14 senatorial elections in a meeting tonight.

Done deal

Despite playing coy about its plans, the Wednesday Group forming a coalition with the United Opposition was a "done deal," Sen. Panfilo Lacson said yesterday.

Pangilinan said that "things were still fluid," but remained hopeful the group would eventually join UNO.

A reunion, who asked not to be named, said the Wednesday Group was delivering its announcement because Villar feared he would be ousted by administration allies in the chamber if he declared his decision to join the UNO ranks.

"It's a done deal. For reasons known to them, they're just delaying the formal confirmation until the UNO does," Lacson, one of the eight candidates drafted by the UNO-led coalition, told reporters on Tuesday.

The senator said Villar, Pangilinan and Recto had unanimously told him they would run with UNO, while Arroyo had indicated that he would go with whatever ticket his three colleagues would choose to join.

"I will trust the results of the four gentlemen. I've talked to them as a group and as individuals, and they have time and again told me they would not change their minds," Lacson said. "I think eventually they will join UNO."

Miscommunication

He said he could not imagine the four not joining UNO after they became Villar's party mate, Cayetano, and Pangilinan's party mate, Rep. Benigno Aquino III, had been drafted into the UNO-led coalition.

Lacson believed that the links between the UNO and the Wednesday Group were just an offshoot of miscommunication.

The kingpin of opposition also wondered when Pangilinan expressed dismay over the manner UNO was treating the Wednesday Group, and accused the UNO of dictating to the group with a "take it or leave it stance."

UNO leaders announced last week their eight official senatorial slates, but left out Villar, Pangilinan, Recto and Arroyo. They were quick to assure the four, however, that the remaining slots were reserved for them.

The four senators, who formed the Wednesday Group when they were elected to their first term in 2001, will be joined in the reorganized Vice President Noli de Castro, who was originally part of the group when he was still a senator.

De Castro, an ally of Mr Arroyo, has vowed to campaign for the Wednesday Group.

The possibility of the Wednesday Group splitting loomed amid reports that Recto and Senate President Arroyo were likely to join the administration slate.

Pangilinan, it was reported, was not acceptable to the opposition because of his role as "Mr Neat," the re-counting officer who single-handedly pointed to the opposition during the canvassing of the results of the 2004 presidential election.

Pangilinan, husband of popular actress-singer Sharon Cuneta, has also displeased the administration after he and Drilon of the Liberal Party called for the latter's resignation at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal in 2005.

Senator Arroyo, who is reportedly "our house" on running, played a key role as a House prosecutor in the Senate impeachment trial of Estrada.

Villar was the Speaker when the House impeached Estrada in 2000, but the skillful politician has mended fences with the ousted President.

PRESIDENT Arroyo and Vice additional stocks of Filinvest Tower I, Ayala Avenue.

Since his election to the 2001, Villar has quietly nurse with critics in the latter's ex Tenny Binay, whose bid to dou

He soon reportedly took a month shortly before Villa the Senate presidency in July months that followed. T "consolidation" on the 2007 elections.

Though he was groomed the opposition, Villar and destructive opposition Lacs he is expected to work in Senate presidency if he wi move to the chamber.

Differences

Villar, 57, also rose to nati senate after his role in formula ment, is seen as a potential candidate in 2010.

The Senator opposed the campaign aimed at overh Constitution and the move to of Representatives to convo to a constituent assembly to Constitution.

GMA allies in House

From page A1

subpoena documentary and testimonial so that he could prepare his defense.

The committee thumbed down the plea and proceeded to resolve the complaints separately lodged by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, his sons Rep. Juan Miguel and Dimaling, and Rep. Lito Lapid or ignore it altogether last year.

Committee Vice Rep. Lito Villafuerte moved to vote on the merits of the complaints. He said that the committee should not expel Cayetano, but opt for a lesser penalty which he said was "reasonable enough."

Diosdado Arroyo said his family felt "vindicated," and that it separated the committee's decision of a lesser penalty.

Cayetano, who left before his censure vote was announced, appeared unperturbed when he learned of it.

'Defeat of accountability'

"It's a victory of the Arroyos, the ethics committee and the Malacañang palace. It's a defeat for accountability and transparency in government," Cayetano said. He added that in the end, it was not him but the penalty that was important.

"The people were looking for accountability and a legal mechanism for finding out the truth. But the ethics committee denied the people this mechanism, so instead of the legislature providing a check and balance on the executive, it ended up protecting and covering up for the executive," said Cayetano.

"The charge is not the truth or falsity of the German account but that I engaged in disorderly behavior unbecoming of a congressman in have committed disorderly behavior, it must not only be baseless and false, but it must have been malicious and in complete disregard of the rights of the victim," said Cayetano.

The lawmaker insisted that if he were to be expelled based on his Sept. 5, 2006, privilege speech on the German account, more than half of the congressmen should also be expelled for the privilege speeches and resolutions denouncing corruption and other people with anomalies.

He said that anothy, an investigation was preceded by a privilege speech.

Inquiry premature

"In my case, after saying it is the impeachment, they voted not to investigate. Then instead they filed an ethics case. In other words it's premature. They can't say I have no basis because they never investigated it in the proper forum."

Yesterday's hearing had earlier turned into an unruly screaming match.

Committee vice Rep. Lito Villafuerte allies counsel Jesus Cayetano as he sought to defend himself from the charge that he had committed improper conduct for accusing the First Family of having a drinking session described as "Rajah Duterte-like" in Malacañang.

With time running out and the House set to adjourn today, the committee agreed to adopt the report of the fact-finding mission to Munich, which convened Monday night. The report was based solely on the hand-carried minutes earlier issued in Arroyo.

The now "expanded" committee, which was said to consist seven members and a national television audience by the minutes, was divided by Rep. Roilo Golez, stated that not one member of the Arroyo family had account or made transactions with the bank in the past 10 years.

Lopez also presented the waiver voluntarily signed by the Fest Deutschman in Munich which had authorized Hypobanque "to look into any and all accounts" of the Arroyos whether in its main office in Munich or any of its branches around the world.

The committee also overwhelmingly voted to deny the "clearance to evidence" lodged by

e President Hadi de Castro during the farting rites of Corp. and the bell-ringing at the Philippine Exchange

Pichay is now on board Team Unity Senate slate

By Christine O. Avendaño, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Cynthia D. Balana

MANILA, Philippines — Speaker Prospero Pichay, a staunch ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo, is now part of the administration's Team Unity senatorial ticket.

Mr. Arroyo announced the inclusion of Pichay in Team Unity at a meeting she had with Lakas-CMD officials and members the other day in Malacañang, her political adviser Gabriel Claudio said yesterday.

Claudio said Pichay was endorsed by Lakas officials and the League of Provinces of the Philippines.

Pichay became the latest senatorial candidate of the administration than Defense officials had announced.

A few weeks ago, Malacañang said Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor and Solicitor Gen. Miguel Zaldivar—staunch supporters of the President—were in the slate.

The President last week openly endorsed Defensor's and Zaldivar's candidacies in Bacolod.

Pichay opposed the possible entry of former opposition Senators Vicente Sotto III and Senate Aquilino Pimentel Jr. into the administration slate.

Sotto and Pimentel joined Lito Lapid and the Nacionalista People's Coalition, an ally of Mr. Arroyo, sparking talk that they would be part of the administration senatorial slate.

Claudio said the administration "reaffirmed" its opposition to Pichay the issue of opposition members in the administration slate.

Claudio pointed out the case of Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, an ally of former President Joseph Estrada, who "out of conviction and out of consistency of purpose" joined the administration ticket in 2004 and eventually won.

Pichay, who said that Mr. Arroyo addressed him as "senator" at the Lakas luncheon on Monday, said he had nothing personal against Sotto or Gordon.

Political coalitions during elections are just meaningful of convenience because, in the end, there will be mutual jostling and betrayal among candidates in the administration and opposition tickets, according to Santiago.

Santiago was commenting on the resolution for the delay in the completion of the senatorial tickets of Team Unity and of the United opposition.

"They're afraid that the group with whom they will affiliate will betray them. That's the real reason why these negotiations are dragging," she said.

Santiago cited her own experience when her political party, the People's Reform Party, joined the coalitions of Estrada and Mr. Arroyo when she ran for senator.

"It's [very] easy or reasons for him self-herself. Coalition is valid only for electoral purposes. There is no real coalition in a campaign. It's every man to himself. They never campaigned for the entire ticket. I was very amused," she said.

Infomercials

A freezing magnate with a classic rags-to-riches story, Villar made a successful leeway bid in 2001 with his campaign slogan "Mr. Ging si Tirgas."

But Villar said he would not declare himself a senatorial candidate until the deadline on Monday.

Like other early birds, who appear in television ads couched as infomercials, Villar wore to "Mahalin Mo Ko" that advocates love and respect for women.

Until the campaign period for aspiring senators begins on Feb. 12, it is illegal for them to advertise their candidacy. With a report from Cynthia D. Balana

vote to suspend Cayetano

Rep. Rodolfo Antonino said that the discrepancies were to be expected since the book issued several sets of original documents.

"But they are one and the same," said Villabrille.

Before things got out of hand, Domogan changed his earlier decision to have the photocopies marked as evidence, and instead ordered that the originals should be the ones admitted by the committee.

Waiver a hoax

But soon after he banged the gavel, the committee was plunged into chaos again when Cayetano insisted that the waiver signed by the First Gentleman was not only "limited" but was a hoax because it did not cover all the accounts or transactions of the First Family here and abroad.

"It should be in the report that the First Gentleman was lying and he deserves to say sorry to the Filipino people," said Cayetano, shoving jeers, taunts and boos from the majority desk members in the committee.

Domogan reminded Cayetano that Mr. Arroyo had explicitly asked him to go with the team to Munich, but the opposition lawmaker had declined the offer, claiming he already waiving his right to personally talk with Saudi officials.

Asked by Cayetano's lawyer-lawyer on a universal waiver, Bhavanira said that although he was not privy from the long list of flight forms Domogan, he told Cayetano that the report was and he the exclusive consumption of Cayetano but "for the consumption of all of us."

"I'm hurt by what he's saying," said Mr. Macalintal, who provided many relief talent for suddenly brought out a bundle of red roses.

Red roses

He said the roses which he handed to Cayetano showed that the latter was not being given to the First Gentleman as a "gift."

"This is my gift to you," he said.

Cayetano, who represents Davao-Garcia of Tagaig-Paterno, received the gesture by handing Macalintal three pieces of baler (duck eggs).

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Empty boasts

EDITORIAL

BRIG. GEN. BENJAMIN DOLORFINO SAYS THE "invitation" was phrased in this way: "We invite you to have an extended workshop here." With 1,000 armed men around them, how could Dolorfino decline such an invitation from MNLF leader Ustadz Habier Malik? As Dolorfino himself put it, "You have no choice but cooperate because it's their link." He said the main purpose of the gathering was an exchange of firearms: four firearms were returned to the government, including a sniper rifle the AFP wanted back in particular. In exchange, two long firearms taken from MNLF fighters were handed back.

Much press attention has focused on a roasted calf served by the MNLF to the government contingent—entertained, Dolorfino says, by the Armed Forces of the Philippines to the tune of P20,000. Some reports say P450,000 was handed over as "goodwill money," a euphemism for ransom. Other accounts insist there was no ransom, only "assistance" for the families of slain MNLF fighters.

Presidential Adviser Jesus Dureza tried to be diplomatic and culturally sensitive about it: the whole incident revolved around "an indigenous way of settling" matters which is "very sensitive to discuss," though he did add, "I told Malik you should realize this is something that will have a great effect on confidence level or trust." What may be par for the course for those in the field has triggered bloodthirsty accusations of banditry and kidnapping-cum-ransom.

The Sulu incident may indeed be a kind of semi clash-of-civilizations, but it is also about the perils of officials believing their own rhetoric.

In the 1970s, the AFP fought a bloody and brutal war that generally resulted in military victories for the Philippine government. But the fighting culminated in a political settlement. The Tripoli Agreement arrived at between President Ferdinand Marcos and the MNLF remains to this day the linchpin of relations between the national government and Moro fighters. It was the cornerstone of later agreements arrived at during the Ramos administration. The introduction of foreign observers has helped to keep an uneasy, brittle peace, but peace nonetheless between the majority of Moro fighters and the government.

But there will be no permanent peace until the fundamental contradiction between Philippine commitments in the Tripoli Agreement and what the Philippine Constitution contains are resolved. The country remains a unitary one, which only grants autonomy on the basis of referenda, something many Moro leaders are ambivalent about.

Furthermore, there remains the question of a legal system based on Islamic religious law and its compatibility with a republic that is, officially anyway, secular. The Tripoli Agreement predates our present Constitution, but talks between Moros and government leaders have evolved to proposing, if not yet officially accepting, a kind of commonwealth status for Moro areas.

A fundamental lack of trust between both sides, as Dureza pointed out, is what weakens peace efforts. That lack of trust has been only partially resolved by foreign intervention in the form of observers. But could the Philippines accept additional foreign intervention, by way of a treaty allowing other nations to be guarantors of a commonwealth status for Moro areas?

In the meantime, though, the policy of all-out war has President Macapagal-Arroyo reveling in her latest incarnation as Supreme Warlord of the Philippines. She has missed no opportunity to brag to the world—and to America, in particular—about successes when splendid success has been achieved in hunting down the Abu Sayyaf.

No one denies that the Abu Sayyaf is on the run, and rightly so. However, the fighting is leading to collateral damage and as long as military operations take place, the areas affected will be unsafe and always on the brink of open revolt.

Which only increases the zones for opportunistic acts of atrocities, which the Jolo incident tragically was. The government became a victim of its own propaganda. It was prematurely proclaiming victory, while gloating over the irony in her unresolved fight it has on its hands. It says it is increasingly in charge—only to be shown to be incapable of extending the law outside its own military reservations.

And yet, the military leadership itself has said that de-escalation is the only sensible way of achieving victory. It is weak civilian leadership, in the end, that confuses a press release with an enduring achievement.

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St. Valentine also patron saint of flower farmers

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

SEEING MIND IS GECTARES AND GECTARES of vegetables in Benguet have been devastated by frost. Next week, Benguet farmers will hit the jackpot because the cash of their sufferers will be lavished on flowers to be delivered on the day of the dead, All Saints' Day.

I think among the most enjoyable means of livelihood is the raising of flowers. Of course, the work is backbreaking—hoeing the garden, planting the seeds, applying fertilizer, watering the plants twice a day, weeding soon and even of plants and protecting them from pests. But once the plants begin to bear flowers, they are a joy to behold, with hundreds and hundreds of the flowers nodding in the wind as if inviting the gardener, "Take me. Take me."

And when you walk among the flowers, the perfume is just overwhelming. The best and most expensive perfume in the world cannot replace that feeling.

Harvesting and selling the flowers are even better. Then you get the money you worked so hard to earn for several months. And when you see buyers exchanging your flowers, or even just the girl holding your bouquet gazes so her by her lover or, more likely, a subject will run around because the pages of a book doesn't your heart swell with pride and happiness?

Once a friend took me to the campaniita garden in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. There where most of the campaniita garlands sold in Metro Manila are made. The whole place is covered with flowers are all planted to campaniita bushes and their scent perfume the air. The green wire leaves are dotted with white flowers. And over the flowers are bees women and children.

The flowers are picked while still unopened. The flowers are of flowing unopened eyes, for when they are open, they are of little use to the gardeners. There is little chance of seeing the white star shaped flower in full bloom.

And your own heart happy.

Back in my childhood home in Malabon, we used to have a campaniita patch on one side of the open-air compound. My mother and sisters, as well as a number of aunts and cousins, liked to raise flowers, and our place was full of flowers of all kinds, shapes and colors. That does not count the blossoms from the fruit trees all over and from the kalamansi trees around our house that burst with profuse pink blossoms every September to send the famous cherry blossoms of Japan.

My cousins pulled the campaniita flowers and made them into garlands. They used the fragrant flowers of the cosmi or the sun-shaped flower of a bush appropriately called "kamlia," as embellishments. Some planters pulled to sell the garlands in the neighborhood. Our garlands were longer, had bigger and more campaniitas, but the buyers always wanted to make sound. I was chased them during those times.

My eldest brother had his patch of gumitas, but planted vegetables, not flowers. He found several raised garden beds and planted pechay, radish, mustard and lettuce. And of course, we always had vines of ipo and potato climbing on bamboo trellises. Bitter, ripe bitter and pulses climbed over any trash or tree that was handy. Above was planted along the fishpond dikes climbing on kalamati sticks. A clutch of free-roaming chickens and three ducks supplied us with eggs and meat. A nanny goat with two kids supplied us with milk. And we always had a piglet or two being fattened for special occasions.

So we were quite self-sufficient when it came to meals. My mother bought rice and salt by the sack, as well as sugar, soap and oil, or much by the bolt from a trader who delivered them to us at a fresh.

Our house was surrounded with vegetables and colorful with flowers. But if I had a choice, I would still like to plant only flowers and sell them.

Again, terror

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

RICARDO BLANCAFLOR, DIRECTOR FOR LEgal, public information and advocacy of the days Terrorism Task Force, writes to try to dispel my terror over the current antiterror bill they are proposing in Congress. Let me take up his concerns one by one.

"The threat of terrorism is real and ever present. It is not a concoction of the imagination or wild speculation. It's real, it's everywhere, with the public exposed to imminent danger unless we put measures to check, disrupt, their plans and acts, and persevere them before they can kill the innocent and wreak havoc on our security and economy."

I agree absolutely, asking only minor exception to the word "threat." Terrorism is not just a threat in this country. It is a reality. It is even others to use the very heart of Makati itself, Investors to the horrendous, if puny, form of a president who spoke to God about horrible sensing a million votes over her instant rival and bringing a public school teacher who witnessed the shooting. Can anything be more terrorist than that conversation between GMA and Garci? The film harped only between victims, the current non-elected government has beheaded democracy, democracy's dismembered bound being the one.

"We're not just in imminent danger from terrorists, we're facing unanswered cases as we speak. Count the number of political activists and prominent journalists murdered in this country. Truly we must check this vicious cycle of crime. That is not done by the antiterror bill, that is done by the police."

"Terrorism is an extraordinary crime that necessitates extraordinary remedies in today's extraordinary times. The Super Ferry and Valentine's Day bombings could have been avoided had we had an antiterrorism law that could've kept the suspects behind bars."

Not at all. Terrorism is an extraordinary crime that necessitates only the very ordinary remedy of common sense. If you hear a public official in a surveillance tape asking a deadly character to "take out" a certain Cardinal or church, would you go on to appoint that public official as the head of national security on the ground that the target conversation was illegally gotten and everyone has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty? Certainly not. If you can't get the evidence and then some the key guy you are to keep put him under preventive suspension and keep him under a watchful eye. Well, we heard a president ask a deadly character to plant a bomb in the very bosom of democracy and not only did he not put her under suspension or behind bars...or throw her bank deposits, as the antiterror bill proposes...we made her president of this country. So, we do not need extraordinary remedies for extraordinary crimes, you need only plain, simple, ordinary common sense.

And as well, the most ordinary exercise of law enforcement and due process should do the trick. What efficacy that of we had an antiterror bill, we could have kept the suspects that attended the Super Ferry and Valentine's Day massacres behind bars. If we had law-enforcers that simple did their jobs and given the courts the evidence to convict the suspects, they would have been behind bars. You cannot replace stupidity and incompetence with laws. That is remedying the undiscovering. No, more than that, that is putting a gun to your head.

In fact Blancaflor's reasoning is an old, and discredited, one which has been concocted again and again by the police. Each time crime goes up, they say they are busy executing coup d'etats businesses; if not kidnaping the Chinese, they ask for more guns and more powers to deal with the "emergency." And when the "emergency" gets worse because the added guns and powers obviously help them commit more businesses, if not kidnap more Chinese, they ask for still more guns and powers. Ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

We have all the laws we need to stop crime and terrorism. It's just a question of using them rightly. All the antiterrorism bill does is jack up terror.

"The proposed antiterrorism law is one government's response to the challenge of trying to win the war on terror without losing our democratic values and ideals..."

Too late, it's over who rules without a mandate, who executes the violence done to the values as a basis of legitimacy, who presents violence as their only way of trying to enforce her reason, who has enshrined the very thing that brought her to power, which is people power, who has made lying, cheating and stealing supreme virtues apart from national patriotism, who has left nothing positive and acceptable right and left, as an option to defend democracy. There ain't any left.

"Our civil rights are not absolute. Such rights depend upon the survival of the government..."

Nuts. Such rights depend upon the survival of the nation or republic or state or citizens. Governments is not any of those; least of all this one. GMA's survival is not the survival of the nation, republic, state, citizens, democracy or even government. GMA's survival is merely her survival.

"It is only the terrorists who should be afraid of the proposed antiterror law."

Hahahahahaha! Tell that to the kin of the dead.

The most dreadful notice, however, is the possibility of being consumed by our own bias, or our paranoia—which are overriding this administration's one or always thinks) to political expediency and the quelling of legitimate political dissent."

The worst is not just seeing what is not there, it is not seeing what is there. I have a better idea for Blancaflor to contemplate. It comes from Upton Sinclair and it quoted by Al Goodman in "An Inconvenient Truth." All he needs do is substitute "terrorism" for "socialism."

"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

Scorched Earth's impact closer to home

(Continued from Monday)

THE UNITED NATIONS REPORT ON MEDIA global warming has spurred urgent calls from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as well as in New York, Europe, Africa and Asia, for a "massive" concerted global action to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the planet from the catastrophic effects of climate change.

The climate of global warming to the Philippines, though not specifically singled out by the report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is reflected by the warnings issued from New York, Paris, Geneva and Rome.

Of direct consequence to the Philippines are the reports from Jakarta and Hanoi on the immediate threats they face from climate change. The Philippines is one of the countries that are being hit — and will be hit — by more intense droughts as a result of global warming. They are the same range of the most devastating typhoons in the world.

The UN secretary general warned, in a message read on the eve of a gathering of Africans in Nairobi, Kenya: "The depletion of the global environment threatens continued economic and social development. Today, we are all affected by global warming. Tomorrow, we will all be affected — some even struggles

Iskolar ng Bayan musn't be like politicians: freeloaders

THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO Mr. Ahard Tan's column, "Tuition and All" (Inquirer, 1/26/07) where I engaged the following ideas for the UP Board of Regents to consider/debate.

1. Any student who stays in UP longer than the normal duration of the course they are taking (i.e., four years for most undergraduate courses and five years for Engineering and BS BAC should pay the full tuition regardless of the STFAP bracket they belong to, plus a penalty per semester in excess of the course's standard duration. An example if the student takes a leave of absence to represent the university (e.g., UP Madrigal Singers, UPCC, UPBA, UP Basketball Team) and other similar groups, is then exempted from the penalty. The logic is simple: the State should not pay one peso more (via its tuition support) than it needs to, and it should discourage freeloaders.

2. Scrap the concept of the 15 "special seats" in the UP Board of Regents (BOR). Why should there be a student regent? Why should there be a faculty regent? Why should there be an alumni regent? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the private sector? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the President's office? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Education? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Commission on Higher Education? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Budget and Management? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Finance? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Science and Technology? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Agriculture? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Trade and Industry? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Agrarian Reform? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Public Works and Highways? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Interior and Local Government? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Social Welfare and Development? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Health? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Tourism? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Energy? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Foreign Affairs? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Justice? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Labor and Employment? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Agriculture? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Trade and Industry? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Agrarian Reform? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Public Works and Highways? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Interior and Local Government? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Social Welfare and Development? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Health? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Tourism? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Energy? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Foreign Affairs? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Justice? Why should there be a REPRESENTATIVE from the Department of Labor and Employment?

3. UP should integrate in its curriculum—ideally in the last semester—a practicum program wherein each student should render full time (UP) service in any government council to represent institution. This should expose the students to actual governments work and assess the State of RDI by substituting the lobster eg Bayan's opinion. Such the government and the students would greatly benefit from this activity in the end.

LETTERS

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Nograles denies Lakas-Kampi feuding

By Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

DESPITE INTERNAL RIGHTS, THE AD-ministration coalition is strong, officials said yesterday.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles dismissed as "frantasy and extremism" a report that there was infighting between members of Lakas-CMD and Kampi after seats were vacated for the same post in the local and congressional elections.

"That's just political intrigue. There is no infighting. All our parties will respect the equity of the incumbent in all areas where there are candidates coming from the rainbow coalition," he said.

Nograles was reacting to a report that President Macapagal-Arroyo had to step in to resolve the brewing struggle between Lakas-CMD and Kampi.

In a luncheon meeting with officers and members of the majority coalition on Monday the President ordered the formation of an arbitration panel to resolve conflicts between would-be members running for the same post.

Turf war

Nograles acknowledged that there was a turf war among allies "because the opposition has no viable challenger in [some] areas so that whatever is [the] issue is POMA (Oh Aumayot supporters)."

The areas subject to arbitration are the towns, districts and provinces where the incumbents have been appointed, according to the House majority leader.

"We have to decide who will take over, but that's only 30 percent [of the country]. Most areas, 70 percent, have no political conflicts among Lkas opposition. But it is that, in most areas, there are no serious opposition candidates, especially in the countryside," he said.

Same seats contested

Rep. Michael Duavit of Bicol, secretary general of the pro-administration wing of the Nationalist People's Coalition, earlier said that in many areas, administration allies were contesting the same seats.

Garry Estipuldito, deputy speaker for Mindanao, said the "tension" in the coalition was surfacing because each party was hunting for its chosen candidates.

But he said the tension "is manageable and for from creating division in the coalition ranks."

Estipuldito said the creation of an arbitration panel was proof that the coalition was "mature emotionally and diplomatically."

"Unlike the United Opposition, the administration coalition is not breaking up and its solidarity will hold and will be one of the keys to its poll victory," he said.

Estipuldito, the Lakas chair for Surigao, said the arbitration panel would ensure that everyone's interest was given due attention so that a consensus on the list of local administration candidates could be reached as soon as possible.

"This is how we finalize the list of our candidates, amicably and democratically. Everyone's side is heard. This way there will be no bickering or fighting," he said.

Kampi Representative Lito Villafuerte and Bukidnon Governor Jose Maria Zubiri reportedly had a heated exchange over the issue of who will be named as the standard bearer of the administration coalition in Bukidnon.

SC rules vs doc, hospital ...

Front page 4 ▸

The tribunal's ruling affirming the appellate court's decision of Sept. 8, 1998, was written by Justice Angelina Sandoval Gutierrez and issued on Jan. 31.

Arnpil operated on Aguina in 1984 in the course of her treatment for cancer of the thyroid. (The thyroid[sic] gland joins the rectum, which in turn joins the anus, or the opening where solid waste passes out of the body.)

He found that the cancer had spread to the patient's left cavity. Dr. Jose Fuentes then conducted a hysterectomy, where portions of the urinary ureter were removed.

Nurses' report

It was Arnpil who completed the surgery.

According to operation records, the attending nurses called Arnpil's attention to the missing gauze ("sponge count lacking [1]") and a search was conducted. But despite the fruitless search, the surgeon "instructed[it] be closure."

Aguina subsequently experienced "excruciating pain" in her anal region. The pieces of gauze measuring 1.5 inches in width more or less found—one causing a grave infection in her vaginal canal.

Aguina and her husband Enrique filed a complaint for damages before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, which, on March 17, 1995, found PSI and the two surgeons liable. The case was later elevated to the appellate court.

But the Supreme Court cleared Fuentes of liability, saying Arnpil could not be the other surgeon's watch after the hysterectomy and allowed him to leave the operating room.

'Callous negligence'

In agreeing with the Quezon City RTC's invocation of the doctrine of corporate negligence against the PSI liable, the Supreme Court said hospitals were obliged to monitor their enrolled staff as part of their responsibility to provide quality health care.

The tribunal also said that PSI exhibited "callous negligence" in failing to act on Aguina's condition, and that it was supposed to know about the procedures carried out on the patient as well as the untoward report on the two missing pieces of gauze.

"Not only did PSI breach its duties to oversee or supervise all persons who practice medicine within its walls, it also failed to take even the most basic step in checking negligence committed," the high court said.

"This renders PSI not only extremely liable for the negligence of Dr. Arnpil under Article 2180 of the Civil Code, but also directly liable for its own negligence," it said.

The high court pointed out that PSI profited financially from the actions of its doctors and, in turn, should be held liable for their omissions as well.

Financial profit

It added that PSI had failed to prove that it had exercised "utmost" with "the "diligence of a good father of a family."

The tribunal also said that an employer-employee relationship existed between PSI and Arnpil, and that the hospital presented the latter as a doctor associated with it.

"Thus, [a case] where it can be shown that a hospital, by its actions, has held out a particular physician as its agent and/or employee and that a patient has accepted treatment from that physician in the reasonable belief that it is being rendered in behalf of the hospital, then the hospital will be liable for the physician's negligence," the high court said.

The tribunal further said that by displaying to its lobby the names and specializations of its physicians, PSI was to effect endorsing their services.

"We concur with the Court of Appeals' conclusion that [PSI] is not exempted from passing off the blame to the physicians whose name it proudly paraded to the public directory leading the public to believe that it vouched for their skill and competence."

"Indeed, PSI's act is tantamount to holding out to the public that Medical City hospital, through its accredited physicians, offers quality health care services."

Deception

As for Arnpil, the Supreme Court said he had deceived Aguina by not disclosing to her the information about the missing pieces of gauze.

"Doctor and patient must mutually act on the agreement by Dr. Arnpil has operated on a deliberate wrongful act of deceiving his patient. This is a clear case of medical malpractice or, more appropriately, medical negligence," the tribunal said.

Both surgeons had assured Aguina that the pain she was feeling even after her discharge from the hospital was a natural result of the surgery.

Aguina subsequently sought treatment in the United States, where she was found to be free of cancer.

It was after her return to the Philippines later in 1996 that the pieces of gauze were found in her body.

The heavens sought our libation devices, identified by the hospital's marketing staff as the hospital's spokesperson, for comment. But she could not be reached after repeated attempts up to press time. Leila B. Salaverria

Orbiting junk in space ...

Front page 4 ▸

the critical spatial density, the point at which a chain reaction becomes inevitable—they prove quite accurate.

Early this year, after a half-century of growth, the federal list of detectable objects 10 inches wide or larger reached 10,000, including dead satellites, spent rocket stages, a camera, a hand tool and paint chunk of whirling debris left over from chance explosions and destructive tests.

Now, a growing consensus is that Jan. 11 of an unidentifiable rocket that shattered an old satellite into hundreds of large fragments means the chain reaction will most likely start sooner. If their predictions are right, the cascade could put billions of dollars' worth of aerospace machinery at risk and eventually disrupt life on Earth by knocking out satellites.

Federal and private experts say early estimates of 800 pieces of detectable debris from the shattering of the satellite will grow to more than 1,000 as observations continue by tracking radars and space cameras. At either number, it is the worst such episode in space history.

Today, next year or next decade, some piece of whirling debris will tear the ensemble, experts say.

Belt of debris

In April, Beijing is to play host to the annual meeting of the advisory group, known as the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee. Donald J. Kessler, a former head of the orbital debris program at Nasa and a pioneer analyst of the space threat, said Chinese officials at the latest would probably feel "some embarrassment."

Cascade warnings began as early as 1978. Kessler and his Nasa colleague Burton G. Cour-Palais, writing in The Journal of Geophysical Research that spending junk that formed every junk would produce "an exponential increase in the number of objects with time, creating a belt of debris around the Earth." The New York Times

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Across the NATION

House body backs mining resumption

SORSOGON CITY—THE ENVIRONMENT COMmittee of the House of Representatives favored the lifting of the cease and desist order imposed by the Pollution Adjudication Board (PAB) on the mining operations of Lafayette Phils Inc. (LPI), said the head of the committee.

Rep. Leovigildo Banaag (1st District, Agusan), however, said that the committee would continue to monitor the mining operation to ensure that the company maintains its compliance with the conditions set by the PAB and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

He said the committee has an oversight function that it would use to continuously monitor LPI's operations.

Banaag said the bypass to a mobile phone transferee that the committee's decision was based on the result of the on-site inspection conducted by its members, led by Rep. Jose Solis (2nd District, Sorsogon), committee vice chair, late last year.

The Agusan legislator said that part of the committee's recommendations was the creation of another team to carry out Lafayette's fully complied with conditions specified by the PAB and the DENR.

Banaag's committee conducted a series of committee hearings last year following complaints from Sorsogon fishermen on the mining operations' effects on the province's sea areas.

He, however, said that the committee report has yet to be approved by the House regular session.

Meanwhile, Carlos Dominguez, president and CEO of LPI, said the company has fully complied with the 26 conditions set by the DENR and PAB.

Dominguez, who was in Bayan Bapa (Mati) Monday to meet fishermen's group Kilusang Bayan, said the mining site was already prepared for operation since late November last year but the administration building and bunkhouses were damaged by typhoon "Reming."

Environmental infrastructures, however, were spared by the typhoon, he added.

Dominguez said improvement and rehabilitation work in the mine site cost the company some ₱2.8 million and they were planning to further improve the facilities in anticipation of strong typhoons in the future.

Barangay Bapa Kitnag Bapa Kitnag appealed to the government to lift the cease and desist order (CDO) against LPI after the company met the conditions of the PAB.

Residents feared heavy rains Monday morning as they waited for Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes.

Reyes, however, failed to arrive as bad weather on the island prevented the helicopter he was riding in to land due to poor visibility.

Instead, Reyes talked with reporters waiting for him at the mine site through mobile phone and said that he was sending a technical team Tuesday to evaluate Lafayette.

Reynold Bonnevie, village chair of Barangay Buhdhod which hosts the mine site, told the Inquirer that Bapa Bapa residents fear their jobs due to the non-operation of the mining company.

Bonnevie showed that local residents urgently need funds, local officials' discussions on the damages they suffered after floating has reached this town.

Reyes said he would await the report of the technical team and was expecting the PAB to come up with a decision on July 8.

Barangay Bon Rand Lee, meanwhile, said that he was maintaining his position that it should be the DENR which should decide since the issue concerns technical matters. Bobby O. Labadlan, Inquirer Southern Luzon

CALL CENTER
A member of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 9 (MBLT9) checks his cellphone in the only spot where cellular phone signal is available in Barangay Bedbed, Patikul, Sulu. The MBLT9 was the unit involved in a gunfight with the Moro National Liberation Front on Jan. 16 in Timpook, Patikul.

Public warned of new scam in DA funds

DAVAO CITY—THE KUSAN PARTY list group warned about a repeat of the congressional fertilizer scam after Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap said his department was asking for P3-4 billion in additional funds.

Jayash Amparuan, Nasyo deputy national secretary general, said her group has monitor suspicious of the real motive behind Yap's request for an additional budget especially as the May elections draw near.

Amparuan said that shortly before the 2004 elections, the DA also received additional funds, which all legally went to the campaign of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President has denied the allegations when it came out during the Senate investigation of the congressional fertilizer scam.

"This department has a dark history of disaster graft and corruption and their experience was not enough reason for all of us to be suspicious about the real motive behind the request for more funds," Amparuan said.

Yap said the additional funds would be spent for upgrading of the country's irrigation facilities, saying that failure to do so could drastically reduce rice harvest in the next two years.

Yap also said the additional budget would be spent to boost production in the country's corn areas.

But Amparuan said the funds could be spent to ensure the victory of the administration candidates.

"The government has to stop using the plight of the poor farmers in front of their own agenda," Amparuan said.

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) also aired the same suspicions. "The government seems to be handing a more bigger than that of the ₱728-million fertilizer scam for the coming elections," Danilo Ramos, KMP secretary general for Southern Mindanao, said.

Ramos said the problem of farmers in these regions "has been there since time immemorial."

"They should have acted on it long time ago and not now when they obviously needed money for the elections," Ramos said. AFP/Y-BC Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao

Fear of bird flu stops Sagada 'ikik' tradition

SAGADA, MT. PROVINCE—FOR the first time in this town's history, residents, including children, stopped the fish or the traditional hand clapping, due to threats of the avian influenza virus, a local official said.

In 2006, the town council passed an ordinance banning fish to prevent the spread of the bird flu virus and carried by migratory birds but local officials said some ignored the law.

Councilor Dave Gallan said some residents defied the ban then for celebrating the All it is traditional practice that can never be stopped in the town.

"But now, we noticed that no one went to Mt. Amjuyao to hunt. We also monitored the rice paddies where the hunters would normally gate through and locals would say no residents had gone up the mountain," said Gallan.

Mt. Amjuyao, which straddles the villages of Ambasing and Sagada, is a favorite hunting ground of residents and tourists. BK, which uses nets to trap birds, is done at night when migratory birds roost on the mountain during the cold season, from September to March.

Tourism guide Lakay operates the Ark site stopped hunting birds due to fear of the possible outbreak of bird flu in the town.

"I used to do it before with other residents but I did not hunt birds recently for security purposes. I am afraid of bird flu and there is a local directive banning the ikik," said George Tadiyan, a member of the Sagada Environmental Guides Association (SEGA).

Gallan said the issuance of quotas of lights in the mountain at night, coming from lamps carried by bird hunters, was an indication that bird had stopped.

He said residents earn every season of the dangers of bird flu, which has infected humans and ravaged the poultry industry in Asia and other parts of the world, because of the information campaign that the local government launched. Dexter Cabalza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Iloilo health execs raise alarm over rabies

By David Israel Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—A LITTLE OVER a month from the start of the year, the province of Iloilo already registered five deaths caused by rabies, according to the Iloilo Provincial Health Office (IPHO).

The IPHO also registered nineteen over the unusual number of deaths when compared to those in 2006, which reached only 11.

Dr. Bernida Grace Trebuchi identified the latest victim as a two-year-old Hermie Aquinaldo of Barangay Dungoc in San Joaquin town, who died on Feb. 2.

Trebuchi urged residents to avoid the movement of their pets, mostly dogs and cats. "They must have a sign for their animals, she said during a press conference held Monday.

At least 15 deaths were listed in Iloilo due to rabies last year, while more than 3,000 cases were reported.

The IPHO had immunized 43 percent of the dog population in the province last year, up from only 15 percent in 2005, she said.

Based on the Iloilo provincial canine prevention and control program 2006 summary, there were about 265,501 dogs in the province. Of these, however, only 118,230 were vaccinated.

Also, Trebuchi lamented that despite the IPHO's campaign to ban the eating of dog meat, people in far-flung municipalities find dog meat irresistible.

Eating a rabid animal exposes a person to the risk of being infected by rabies.

Trebuchi said dog bites caused 90 percent of the rabies cases, while cats, monkeys and other animals were responsible for the rest of the cases.

A RABIES awareness poster reminds the people of Iloilo of the dangers of stray dogs. The number of rabies cases in the province is alarming, according to health authorities.

Miranda said all stray dogs must be killed and eliminated.

The Animal Welfare Act, according to Miranda, allows the immediate killing of those animals because of the danger of being from rears.

Dr. Hilario Bendezu Jr., provincial veterinarian, said the Animal Welfare Act provides that stray dogs must be shot in the head by the Philippine National Police, using guns not lower than .22 cal. It must be done outside public view using a licensed gun, Bendezu said.

The province's 42 municipalities and a component city have existing ordinances on terminating all stray dogs.

Since 2006, Trebuchi said local government units in the province of Iloilo have dog control ordinances.

"It is a matter of political will for the local chief executives on the enforcement of these ordinances," he said.

The local chief executives hold the owner of the dog liable if he/she bites someone, Trebuchi said.

NORTH COTABATO police chief Fedencio Dulay Jr. looks at an armored personnel carrier that bogged down while it was pursuing Moro guerrillas who fanned out of jail-fill terrorists that included three senior suspects.

Woman dies in shelter where villagers fled to after clash

DINAIGAN NORTH COTABATO—A 60-year-old ailing woman has died in one of the eight evacuation centers here as displaced families continued to refuse to return home for fear of further clashes between Moro Islamic Liberation Front guerrillas and government soldiers.

The residents, according to authorities, want an assurance they would be safe in their homes.

Councilor Wenecio Dumampac, chair of the town council's health committee, said not say when the woman died but he said that she was already ill when her family fled the fighting two weeks ago.

At least six persons—three of them rebels—died in clashes in at least three villages here Jan. 25.

The clashes sent about 6,000 people to safer grounds. The evacuees continued to stay in crammed evacuation centers despite a beautification project launched last week.

Dumampac said they fear that more evacuees would get sick because of the unfavorable conditions in the evacuation centers.

"They need safe water, clothing and food. They are in a very deplorable situation," Dumampac, a doctor, said.

Shad Tangcalagan, municipal health chief, said that during the day, the evacuees in Barangay Nabalawag, Mustang and Tugal would leave their temporary shelters to go home and to tend to their farms.

They would return to the evacuation centers at night, he said.

Tangcalagan said the evacuees were also receiving medical assistance from the local government.

Dumampac said the local government was also providing the evacuees with food and other basic necessities. Inquirer Mindanao

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MAIN ISSUES IN LAPID-PINEDA FIGHT

Corruption and illegal gambling

'It is a battle for the division of spoils in illegal quarry and illegal gambling'

By Tonette Orejas
City of San Fernando, Pampanga

SAN FERNANDO ARCHBISHOP Paciano Aniceto has not criticized Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid and Board Member Lilia Pineda, the front runners in the gubernatorial race, although these politicians are hounded by the very issues that Catholic bishops want to stamp out: Corruption and illegal gambling.

Both got an praise either from the 70-year-old Aniceto, who has been administering to the largely Catholic Pampanga in the last 15 years.

"They are both administration supporters," was the least that Aniceto said of Lapid, 37, and Pineda, 56, in an interview on Saturday.

Rather than censor or politicians or throw himself in the fray by openly endorsing or discrediting any of them, the activist archbishop chose to focus on sensitizing the capacities of voters to exercise an honest election and to convince them to discern who to choose as political leaders. The Church's machinery for that task remains the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting.

"Let the people exercise their right to choose," Aniceto said.

He said, though, that "moral integrity, performance and competency" in that order, are the measures of qualities of candidates.

Pressed to give his views on the sources of wealth and campaign funds of Lapid and Pineda, Aniceto said: "These are all allegations."

The bishop was referring to the money allegedly stolen by Lapid and his father, Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, from quarry taxes since 1995, and Pineda's monies coming from her husband, Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda, through 30 years of "jueteng" operations in Luzon.

"There should be evidence, documents, witnesses who will testify. There are protests thrown for evidences to clarify," Aniceto said.

But a priest and a lay leader warned Aniceto to openly give moral counsel by rejecting Lapid and Pineda and to demand other Kapampangans to step forward and aspire for public office.

These sentiments indicated the desperation of some Catholics who find themselves "caught between the devil and the deep blue sea" in the May 14 elections drive now.

Another lay leader saw Lilia Pineda as a better option. But the hesitation stems from what her husband would do in her administration should she win.

However, it was unlikely for Aniceto to become a political critic like Limpyong Bayugan archbishop Oscar Cruz. That was not Aniceto's leadership style in his more than 50 years in the priesthood.

LILIA Pineda

PAMPANGA Gov. Mark Lapid

Hands off

Still, Lilia Pineda's big contributions to the archdiocese's charities and church-building projects since Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruption gave no riders for her to get help in her election campaign, according to insider priest.

That was because the clerics in 2005, amid the second "jueteng-gate" scandal, enforced the policy for "some priests" to stop benefiting from jueteng money for personal comfort or parish projects.

The policy was first enforced in 2000 at the height of the jueteng scandals involving then President Joseph Estrada.

Aniceto confirmed that the policy remained in effect and the anti-illegal gambling campaign in parishes was without letup. He said he used the lack of efforts by police and local officials to stop jueteng, which is being protected by none as the small town lottery, a government-sanctioned game.

At the Lapid-Pineda showdown showed signs of intense rivalry, Aniceto expressed hope that their camps would not resort to violence or harm.

"Violence is not good for the province, given its history. Kapampangans are by nature not a violent people. We always had generally peaceful elections here," the bishop said.

Paradox

For a politician to become who from Kapampangan roots, the May 14 elections bring out many paradoxes in Pampanga.

"You have a province of many lovers and heroines and great men and women like President Diosdado Macapagal and Jose and Pedro Abad Santos. It is sad that your choices now are limited on Lapid and Pineda," the priest noted, pointing out what has generated to the degeneration of leaders.

Many of Pampanga's governors in more than 400 years originated from the landed gentry and recently, industrialists and lawyers. They may until Lito Lapid, a movie actor, broke a hundred family in Pinay town, rose to power in 1992.

Lapid's reign at the capitol are no end when he groomed his eldest son, Mark, to take his place as the Arroyo administration plucked him for the Senate.

The younger Lapid is a college graduate with unimpressive academic credentials. Lilia Pineda finished high school and claimed she passed the bar[illegible] of life with flying colors.

The second irony, according to the public, is that quarry and jueteng money, if at all true, is going to be used to win a public office.

But the use of jueteng money for the elections is not an entirely new practice in Pampanga, or even elsewhere.

Reports of Bong Pineda contributing to the campaign kitties of local and national politicians had been around since the Ramos administration.

The Newsweek Magazine reported that in the controversial May 2004 elections, Pineda's money funded the post-election break-in by the "Ratatouille Group" at the Batasang Pambansa to console in the "re-stored" election results of Senator Panfilo Lacson and Mr. Arroyo's, his worst-case and "Samson."

He admitted, though, to helping the Lapids in the 2004 elections. The Lapids have not denied or confirmed Pineda's help but have strongly denied rigging the votes for the Pinedas.

Arroyo's allies

A businessman said Mark Lapid and Lilia Pineda do not only reflect the kind of allies that President Macapagal-Arroyo keeps. They also represent deeper political connections with national significance, he said.

Detailed Lapid, in joining the administration's senatorial ticket, drew in votes for her in 2004. The Pinedas were known to have strongly campaigned for her in Pampanga, said in he one of the four provinces where the massive election cheating took place. (The other three are said to be Cebu, Iloilo and Iloilo).

The businessman expected Mr. Arroyo to groom good leaders because her Garcia Urban Beltway super region program requires great leadership.

In the assessment of several businessmen and politicians, Mr. Arroyo took a bite for Senator Lapid and his son, but for a bigger political reason, which [illegible] leaders in Pampanga called blackmail on the Lapids.

On Friday last week, the senator appeared to have stood in, announcing his plan to run for mayor of Mabalacat City, said administration doing this on a mission for the administration. To relate the senator's financial disaster out of the hold of the political opposition.

In Pampanga, the senator's move is viewed as a bargain for the victory of his son's reelection bid and the reselling of graft-and-corruption charges.

The latest gamble by the senator has not deterred Lilia Pineda. She told the reporters on Monday: "I am not finishing out. I want to do something good for my province. That's my only purpose. And it's coming from my heart. I was forced to stand up against the Lapids's because we are darred to fight them. I don't mind the [illegible] but let me not even the controversy involving my husband."

Her running has true redemptive values on her family and on her, according to a capitol observer who collected what supposedly was the view of lawyer Emilio Mendoza, the former Pampanga governor and justice minister.

First, the Pinedas will cease to be known as a gambling clan but a family that helped end the Lapid era in Pampanga politics.

Second, in losing governor and with the power that goes with it, she shall finally get out of the shadow of her husband.

Still, another official suspected that Bong Pineda was not that optimistic that he was fighting the Lapids to merely get back at them for snubbing his son, Dennis, mayor of Lubao, as the younger Lapid's running mate.

Lilia Pineda said then should be a stop to speculations about her husband's motives. "I just want good leadership in Pampanga and Bong is there to help me," she said.

Former Rep. Joan Pablo Bondoc said the Lapid-Pineda fight is for them being a battle of principles. "It is to decide for the division of spoils in illegal quarry and illegal gambling," said Bondoc, who was still studying whether to run for governor or not.

Number battle

Police sources expect the coming elections to be the conflict over in Pampanga. Both camps will spend gross amounts of money in order to win. The more cunning contest will explain by selling votes.

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NBI seeks answers from Leviste driver

'Employee could give vital info'

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI) will summon the man who was seen with Antonio Leviste on Jan. 31, the same day the former Batangas governor shot his longtime friend and aide, Rodolfo Ian Alan.

Lawyer Raul Lamela, chief of the NBI National Capital Region, yesterday said they would issue a subpoena to Levi Panganiban, who works as a driver at Leviste's Jaden Group of Companies Inc. The latter's office is at the LPL Towers in Legaspi Village, Makati City, site of the killing. Based on logbook entries, Panganiban was one of the last persons to enter the building where Ian Ian Alan' body was later found.

"We will get his statement in the hope that it can help us in the case," Lamela said, adding that Panganiban is expected to appear at the bureau within the week.

De Ian Alan was found dead between noon and 1 p.m. on Jan. 12 inside Leviste's office on the ninth floor of the LPL Towers. He had been shot several times. Leviste later admitted that he shot the victim in self-defense.

According to Lamela, the national operations center of the Makati Police received a report about the incident at around 1:00 p.m.

Citing entries in the logbook of building security guards, Lamela said Panganiban arrived by himself at the LPL Towers at 11:30 a.m.

At 11:52 p.m., he was seen leaving the building together with Leviste. Panganiban, however, returned shortly after but left again at 12:17 p.m. This time, he was "with a certain Orville," Lamela said. "Based on that logbook entries, Panganiban may provide us with information vital to our investigation," the NBI official added.

Last Monday, Marcelito Ambrosio, who also worked for Leviste, went to the NBI to give his statement on the incident. Ambrosio, whose name also appeared in the LPL log book, told the NBI that before the shooting, Leviste had asked him to step over his office and meditate in an argument between him and De Ian Alan.

Computer shops favorite target of Marikina robbers

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

BURGLARS PREYING ON COMPUTER SHOPS in Marikina City robbed four shops in just three days, carting away more than P1 million worth of computers and other equipment, the police reported yesterday.

In all four incidents, the thefts was discovered when the owners opened their computer shops in the morning, leading police to believe that the burglaries were carried out between midnight and dawn.

Police are still searching if the robberies were carried out by the same group although they admitted that this would be difficult to establish because no witnesses have surfaced so far, said PO3 Ediberto Aguila, who is handling two of the four cases.

Two of the four incidents were discovered only yesterday morning.

JET Enterprises owner Anilu Tiongco, whose shop is in Barangay Concepcion Dos, said he lost eight computers, eight video cards and eight memory cards to the thieves.

Cyber Experience Computer Services owner Alfredo Bugtai, 37, also reported that the robbers took 14 computers, 14 video cards and 14 memory cards from his shop in Barangay Tumana. On Monday, two computer shop owners reported that thieves had forcibly opened their establishments and took with them several computers.

DID YOU KNOW

FOUNDED on December 1931, the Manila Jaycees is the first Asian chapter of Junior Chamber International, an organization that seeks to motivate young adults to improve themselves and their communities. The Manila Jaycees became the Junior Chamber International Philippines—now commonly known as The Philippine Jaycees Inc.—6 February 1945. The group is further the prestigious Outstanding Young Men award which began in 1968 as the Ten Outstanding Young Men. The Philippine Jaycees has elected 1,500 members aged 18 to 40. Its national headquarters is in Cebu.

Civil Awareness Jaycees Research

Ex-policeman on board stolen cab arrested by Las Piñas police

By Julie M. Aurelio

MYSTERY, THEFT AND INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS arrested a former policeman who was spotted with a stolen taxi cab in Las Piñas City on Tuesday afternoon.

Elmer Ramos, 31, who used to be assigned at the Eastern Police District, was arrested after concerned residents of Phase 3, BF Martirella, Mamplasan 2, called up the police to report the presence of a stolen cab in the area.

An investigation showed that the cab was stolen from its owner in Pasig City at around 11 a.m. that same day.

The responding officers, PO2 Edwin Luciano and PO1 Mardie Antolin, said they decided to wait for the arrival of the Metro Taxi, with plate number TMN 665, to appear.

They soon spotted Ramos getting into the cab. Ramos was about to start the engine when the policemen approached him and asked him to present the vehicle's documents. Instead, Ramos showed a police identification card signed by Director Jose Calimag Jr. of the Philippine National Police Directorate for Personnel and Records Management.

Las Piñas Police Investigator Ong Ian Jan, however, said that the ID card was fake and that Lubao had retired from the service in 2004.

Ramos, meanwhile, denied that he had stolen the cab.

"I was just told to bring the vehicle to the area by a friend. I didn't know that it was stolen," he told the investigators.

A resident of Bifidendig Marikina City, Ramos was dismissed from the police service after he was charged with drug possession in 2002. He added that he spent nearly four years inside the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City before the Court of Appeals acquitted him of the charges last year.

Police said Ramos would be charged with usurpation of authority and violation of the Anti-Fencing Law.

PUZZLER This carinderia owner on Barangka Street, Mandaluyong City sports a sign that looks like a play on words for "turo-turo," or indicating your item of choice by pointing to it.

Controversial footbridge in Parañaque goes down

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday dismantled for good the remaining portion of a makeshift footbridge that connected a Muslim neighborhood to Sinina Boulevard in Barbaran, Parañaque City.

The operation took on a subdued tone, unlike the incident on Jan. 5 where two residents—one of them a 14-year-old boy—were killed and two others seriously wounded following a clash between the MMDA clearing team and residents. As a result of the clash, the MMDA managed to destroy only half of the footbridge.

The demolition yesterday was carried out under the supervision of the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA), and residents were helpful as they watched the operation.

Bobby Espaldon, head of the MMDA Clearing Operations Group, told the Inquirer yesterday that the DMA allowed to continue in the negotiations between the agency and the leaders of the community to avoid a repeat of the violent incident last month.

The community of an estimated 5,000 residents strategically passed the demolition of the footbridge, saying it was their only access to and from their homes.

However, Espaldon said the bridge had to be destroyed to discourage residents from crossing along Sinina Boulevard—the metropolis' corridor to the international airport.

"We don't phase anybody. We have no choice but to push through with the project so that our roads to the airport won't look awful," he said.

He added that access to the neighborhood must come from within the limits of Pasay City, where it belongs.

Meanwhile, the Pasay City government yesterday said the MMDA should have given them time to clear the eleventh passageway, a span removed 100 meters south beside the neighborhood leading to the Ildefonso Elementary School. Several MMDA operations, however, have already started clearing the passageway.

Some residents who refused to take the longer route, marked in the nearby vicinity of the creek. Students were also warned about their safety while walking on the dirt road at night.

"They should have demolished the bridge two months or until after the end of classes," said Mayor Allan Encabo, who went to the area to oversee the operation.

FILE photo of the makeshift footbridge that once linked a Muslim neighborhood in Pasay City to Sinina Boulevard in Barbaran. The structure was demolished yesterday to stop residents from crossing on Sinina Boulevard, in line with a Metropolitan Manila Development Authority project to restore order in the area.

Wedding rites without frills in Makati City set on Feb. 23

By Jocelyn R. Uy

WANT A HASSLE-FREE WEDDING?

Couples in Makati City who aspire to tie the knot may go to City Hall on Feb. 23 to take part in a mass wedding dubbed "Kasalan sa Makati 2007."

Their guests will be top officials of the city who will serve as witnesses. They will be led by Mayor Jejomar Binay who will also officiate as the civil rites.

Binay's wife, Elenita, and Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado will serve as the primary sponsors of the brides and grooms, with all department heads of City Hall as secondary sponsors.

Bridal bouquets will be provided free to the brides but the couples should bring their wedding rings.

Those who intend to marry must be of legal age and residents of Makati City. They should have been living together for at least five years. Most importantly, both of them must be single.

Interested couples should register with the Women and Cultural Affairs Office in 2/F Bldg. Annex in Barangay Poblacion. They should also submit the following documents: Marriage license, birth certificates, baptismal certificates and (individual community) tax certificates certificates.

On the day of their wedding, grooms are expected to be in white long sleeve shirt and white or dark pants.

Brides, on the other, should wear a simple white gown and a headdress.

Outstanding Mandaluyong residents get 'Bayani' award

By Emerson Cora

[illegible] Mandaluyong City has its own share.

As part of the city's 82nd anniversary celebrations, five persons were conferred on Monday the title of "Bayaning Mandaluyong" ("Hero in Mandaluyong") the highest civilian award given to outstanding Mandaluyong residents.

The five were recipients of the award were: retired Army Gen. Adrian E. de los Santos, businessman Antonio Gallego, Gallego clinic, Narciso Bermudo, an engineer; Dr. Esperanza de Castro, a medical doctor; and educator Dr. Armand Simeon Sidello. They were chosen for bringing honor to the city by excelling in their respective fields.

The award was named after then Mayor "Salenong" Leyva, Laurentino Gonzales and Andres Bonifacio—the heroes of Mandaluyong who were immortalized in a monument located in barangay Hagdang Bato Itaas.

De los Santos, the former chief of the Philippine Army, received the Andres Bonifacio award for excellence in public service and law enforcement. He served for 37 years in the armed forces, during which he received various awards and citations.

The recipients of the Laurentino Gonzales Award were Chua Bucleros and media), Bernardo Ignacio, De Castro (medicine and science) and Pedro De Leon (arts).

Chua, a businessman-journalist, was cited for his contribution "to the advancement of awareness and development, as well the promotion of freedom of the press, both in print and radio."

Bermudo received the award for his achievements in the field of basketball, having been voted Rookie of the Year 1957 and Mr. Basketball of the Philippines from 1962 to 1963.

De Castro, on the other hand, pioneered the family planning program in Rizal province in 1965.

She is also the founder and the first president of the Mandaluyong Medical Society.

Pedrello, an educator, was chosen for his outstanding achievements in education, and held top positions in the Jose Rizal University.

"[The Taylong Bayani Award] may have been the sweetest of all awards and distinctions received by this vintage sportsman because usually it is very difficult to separate your own people," said Mayor Benjamin M. Gonzales if who handed out the awards.

"Mabuhay ang mga pusong sa tunay na bayan (It is here our appreciation for your love country)," he added. "But these people have proven otherwise. They worked not for the award but because it is really in their hearts to serve the country and its people with excellence."

MetroBriefs

Fire hits food stall in Mandaluyong mall

A 4:00[illegible] Mandaluyong City at G. [illegible], yesterday. Customers who were waiting for a ride in front of the establishment were the first to spot the thick black smoke coming out of the [illegible]. They promptly called the attention of security guard who called for assistance from firemen. The fire began in a stall owned by Gerlinda Salandanan and spread to the adjacent Shakti restaurant. Fire investigator Victoria Ugalde said that a short circuit in one of the bread racks caused the blaze that lasted for about an hour. Damage is currently was later estimated at P150,000 but no one was reported killed or injured. The fire did not affect operations of the mall which opened several hours later.

Ayman Cora

Philbankers reunion set Feb. 9

PHILBANKERS and non-officers of the Philippine National Bank are invited to participate in a night of dancing, songs, games and a raffle draw called "Philbankers Unlimited: Heartfelt Part 3." The reunion will be held on Feb. 9 at 6 p.m. at the PNB Training Center, PNB Financial Center, 3rd floor. President Macapagal Boulevard, Pasay City. For details, contact Nina Magpayo-Advincula at 891-6-[illegible] or 525-[illegible] loc. 6234, Angel Dela at 2[illegible] 3287183 or 5250535 loc. 3308, Ana Bercasio at 891-7-3681704 or 8910-001 and Avi Quintal 891-6842-606 or 8905456.

Close watch on Internet cafés in QC mulled

By DJ Yap

MUNICIPALITIES WILL PAY heavily by banning out to Internet cafés and gaming centers in Quezon City may soon be barred from operating such establishments during class hours.

To keep grade school and high school students in the classroom, a Quezon City councilor is pushing for the regulation of Internet cafés, particularly in admitting minors.

Under a proposed ordinance authored by Eptsa Lanot, owners and operators of computer rental shops and gaming centers shall be prohibited from accepting students during school hours that students who want to visit computers for writing reports or for doing research may be allowed only provided they present a written authorization from their teachers or other school authorities.

In such cases, the owner or manager of the computer rental shop shall ask for the student's name and other personal information and require him to sign a logbook, according to the proposed ordinance.

They shall also be required to post signs outside their shops, stating that "minors are not allowed during regular school hours." Violators shall be fined P2,000 on the first offense and P5,000 on the second offense. Third time offenders shall be fined P5,000, on top of losing the permit to operate, consist of their business permit.

Should the proposal pass, the Business Permits and Licensing Office and the Department of Public Order and Safety shall coordinate and implement the rules and regulations within 30 days of its effectivity.

Cops nab woman suspected of duping fellow seniors

By Tina G. Santos

AN ELDERLY WOMAN WAS ARrested by Manila policemen for allegedly duping her fellow senior citizens by pretending to be a government employee engaged in the processing of privilege cards for seniors.

Charged with estafa was Ilan Dianica Reyes alias Lyn Aquino, 64, of Tarnate Bagsan Street, Sta. Cruz, Manila.

The Special Operations Group of the Manila Police District said the arrest was prompted by complaints from several elderly residents who claimed that Reyes had introduced herself as an employee from the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs (Osca) of the Manila City Hall. The victims claimed they were enticed by the suspect to join a local government program called "Magkaisa ng Pilipinong Senior Citizen."

They were allegedly asked for every time to give her P20 each as a "livelihood loan" in exchange for grocery items from Mayor Lito Atienza. She also promised her victims that she would process their senior citizen IDs.

One of the victims, Herminia Ilarena, told authorities she became suspicious when Reyes failed to show her any ID.

Ilarena said a check with City Hall showed that Reyes was not connected with the Osca.

Scientists explore possible new way to fight AIDS

WASHINGTON—A NATURALLY occurring molecule seems vital to immune systems cells' bone-cellular suicide during the onslaught of the AIDS virus and might help keep the body's natural defenses working in HIV-infected people, a study found.

The findings represent a potentially new avenue to fight the effects of the human immunodeficiency virus, HIV, according to a US National Institutes of Health scientists whose work was published on Monday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Paolo Lusso said subsequent at the NIH's National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases linked at the role played by interleukin 7 to reversing the death of T cells, a kind of white blood cell important to the immune system.

Interleukin 7 is a substance important in maintaining proper functioning of the immune system.

AIDS has killed more than 25 million people since it was first recognized in 1981. About 40 million people now live with HIV, with cases high in sub-Saharan Africa hardest hit.

Lusso expressed "reasonable optimism" that treatment involving interleukin 7 may benefit people with AIDS, a disease for which no cure exists.

"I don't think one substance will be applicable to all the patients. It's possible that each [interleukin 7] may benefit some patients and do nothing in other cases," Lusso said in an interview.

"But I think we are moving in the right direction because we are starting to appreciate that antiretroviral therapy alone (raising AIDS drug treatment) is not sufficient to bring back a full immune competence and we are starting to identify at least some strategies that may work."

An estimated 2.8 million people died of AIDS in 2006, the virus attacks the body's natural defenses—the immune system.

In assembling the immune system, HIV hides inside certain T cells. These cells, as the infection progresses, commit cellular suicide—called apoptosis—undermining the body's ability to combat infections and certain cancers. In fact, the virus manages to induce the suicide of many cancer T cells than it already infects.

The researchers, who also included Dr. Liz Vanessa and WARD Director Dr. Anthony Fauci, used blood samples from 240 HIV-infected people. They added interleukin 7 to the blood samples and then gauged the survival of T cells.

The activist patients themselves were not treated with interleukin 7.

The samples with interleukin 7 displayed fewer levels of T cell death. The benefits differed from sample to sample based on the patient's stage of infection, the study found.

The researchers believe interleukin 7 potentially could be used alongside existing AIDS drugs to bolster the immune system.

Lusso noted that existing AIDS drugs can keep the virus at bay for years, but damage to the immune system can eventually provide even after some of such treatment.

Scientists want to find new ways to remedy these immune defects, with the aim to make the immune system functional even in HIV-infected people.

Lusso said apoptosis may be a major mechanism through which T cells die in AIDS. The new study is important, he said, in that it identifies how interleukin 7 "can help—by preventing these cellular suicides."

He said the next step is a study in which monkeys with the the-viruses equivalent of HIV are given interleukin 7 to see if it blocks immune system dysfunction and immune will depletion. Reuters

JAN INDONESIAN man pulls residents to a cart in a flooded street in Jakarta Feb. 6. Flood waters receded in parts of Indonesia's capital on Tuesday but huge areas remained submerged. AP/AFP

Indon floods trigger disease concerns

JAKARTA—FLOOD WATERS HAVE receded in parts of Indonesia's capital on Tuesday, but huge areas remained submerged and officials were on guard for outbreaks of disease among the estimated 340,000 people displaced.

Businesses were also trying to assess the economic impact of the floods, which have caused power blackouts, cut telecommunications and made many key roads impassable.

Top politicians have also been visiting flood victims, as officials trained blame and the media asked why few houses seemed to have been beaten after equally bad floods five years ago.

But disquiet of the Jakarta health department and medical staff were trying to focus on sanitation to prevent disease.

"We want to alert over sick watchers and cuts. People should clean themselves with soap," Supplies of antibiotics were moving late in the day the Jakarta Post newspaper reported.

The floods have killed at least 30 people. Muhammad Ikhsan, spokesperson, Ketut Ermeng Raga Asa said West had either drowned or been electrocuted.

He said flooding in some parts of the city—which together with the authorities is measured to have a population of 14 million—near the US wasap fees had not improved.

"Other areas which are outside the passage of rivers are getting better," the police spokesperson said.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has been visiting flood-hit areas since last week, but critics said there's more needed to be done.

"It is only a positive front for just to show he cares about the plight of the little people. What he needs to show is not that but how he can bring fundamental changes to the right target," said legislator and former minister Muhammad Ikhsan.

He said Yudhoyono, who is still riding high in opinion polls, needed to deliver on his promises to have a cleaner to the next elections in 2009.

Nelvi, a 20-year old street seller who has been living in a room along the rail tracks since last week when water inundated his Central Jakarta house, agreed.

"That officials care only talk about seeing but the little people. Talk more good," he said.

Environmentalists blamed poor city planning in a city that has seen a huge construction boom since the financial crisis of the late 1990s.

"This disaster could have been anticipated but the government does not have a plan for a worst-case scenario. Over the past 30 years water catchment areas in Jakarta have been reduced from about 75 percent to less than 50 percent," Berry Nahendaone of the leading green group, Walhi, told reuters.

The city's downtown apparently be relatively flood-free on Sunday, although muddy flood waters can appear and recede quickly as rain fell from upland areas race into rivers in the city.

There were more heavy rain overnight in Jakarta, although the weather brightened on Tuesday. Disaster traffic jams continued in some areas and several train services flooded.

Muhamad Sidiqqy of the flood crisis center said flood water remained up to 2 meters deep in the Kampung Melayu district in the east of the capital.

Jakarta has 44 districts and 40 are flooded," he said. There has been some success in the floods could be calmed, but the central bank as exported lowered to key interest rate on Tuesday, the ninth reduction in less than a year.

The rupiah and Jakarta stocks have also been led by steady.

Indonesian chief economics minister and Soedrono told reporters on Monday that he did not see a long-term impact from the floods on Southeast Asia's biggest economy. Reuters

1st US officer stands trial for refusing to fight in Iraq

FORT LEWIS, WASHINGTON—A recent married rebel sprained Monday for the first US military officer to openly refuse to go to war in Iraq as protests in his support were organized in several cities across the country.

First Lt. Ehren Watada, 28, pleaded not guilty on charges relating to his refusal to join his unit as it departed for Iraq in June 2006 arguing that the war was illegal and immoral.

Supporters of the officer organized a demonstration outside Fort Lewis, the military base where his court-martial trial got underway Monday 74 km south of Seattle in the state of Washington.

About 26 other protests were planned around the country to show support for Watada, including in New York, Los Angeles, and outside the White House in Washington.

Watada faces up to four years in a military prison on charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice of espousing contempt toward President George W. Bush, of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and purposely missing his unit's deployment when it shipped to the Middle East on June 22, 2006.

The charges are statements Watada made on June 6 defending his decision on the basis that Bush initiated an illegal and immoral war.

"I could never condone of an leader becoming the most we had in him. As I read about the level of deception the Bush administration used to initiate and preserve this war, I was shocked. I became ashamed of wearing the uniform. If the president can betray my trust, it's time for me to make sure what he's selling me to do," Watada said, according to the court martial charge sheets.

The rights group Amnesty International says there 120 prisoner have already been sentenced to between 12 to 72 months in jail for refusing to fight in Iraq.

WATADA

Although the US army insists that a soldier has to respect the chain of command and cannot choose which war to fight in, Watada has said that under the US Constitution he has the right to refuse an illegal order.

Watada joined the army in 2003 and was posted to South Korea until 2006, when he was transferred to Fort Lewis to prepare for deployment to Iraq.

Instead he requested to be transferred to another unit and proposed that he be deployed to Afghanistan. That was turned down.

Since his arrest he has been assigned to an office job in Fort Lewis while awaiting his trial.

His case has garnered significant support in a nation that has turned sharply against the Iraq war. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

Iranian envoy kidnapped in Iraq

BAGHDAD—An Iranian diplomat has been kidnapped in the Iraqi capital, Tehran said on Tuesday. Gunmen "kidnapped the Iranian embassy" of Iraq diplomat in Baghdad, Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi. The second secretary at the embassy in Baghdad, was abducted on Tuesday by gunmen dressed in the Iranian ministry, which operates under the supervision of US forces in Iraq," Mohammad Ali Hosseinian said. He said the kidnapping took place in front of the Baghdad branch office Iranian state-owned bank Bank Melli. AFP

Wave of defections hits S. Korea's ruling party

SEOUL—South Korea's ruling Uri Party teetered Tuesday toward possible collapse as 23 lawmakers quit to create a new political outfit, sending President Roh Moo-hyun's group into an instantly dead in December polls. "With our deep regret and apology to the public, which supported the Uri Party, we are determined to give regular normal power and become a new political party," Lee Jong-kul, one of the rebels, told a press conference. The walkout is a crisis blow for the embattled Roh, who took office in Korea in February last year, and weakens his chances of pushing legislation through parliament before the next election. It is now has only 119 seats compared to 121 for the conservative opposition Grand National Party. (AP)

60 feared dead in shipwreck off Cameroon

YAOUNDE—Almost 60 people were feared dead Monday after a passenger ferry operating between the west African states of Cameroon and Nigeria was shipwrecked, a private radio station in Cameroon reported. An unknown number of passengers were rescued in the accident off the coast of Nkora southwest Cameroon, 60 km from the economic capital Douala and 240 km west of the capital Yaounde. Satellite FM said. The ship was said that likely causes for the tragedy included overloaded in overbad conditions, the poor state of the vessel and overloading. Authorities have opened an enquiry. AFP

Iran ready to test 300 centrifuges

VIENNA—Iran has set up over 300 centrifuges in an underground nuclear plant and will test them soon as it moves towards industrial-level enrichment of uranium in defiance of UN demands, diplomats in Vienna said. The diplomats were speaking after reports last week that Iran has begun the installation of 3,000 centrifuges in a huge underground bunker at its main nuclear facility in the central town of Natanz. "The Iranians have put together at least two cascades (production lines)," of 164 centrifuges each, said a diplomat who closely monitors, with Iran and the Vienna-based UN watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). AFP

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GO BEYOND

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casino

Global warming to hit poor worst, says UN chief

NAIROBI—THE WORLD'S poor, who are the least responsible for global warming, will suffer the most from climate change, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said as unusual rainstorms drew unusual attention around the world on Monday.

"The degradation of the global environment threatens everybody of... and the effects of climate change are being felt across the globe," Ban said in a statement after last week's toughest warning yet mandated it as human for global warming.

In comments read on his behalf at the start of a major week-long gathering in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, Ban said all countries would feel the adverse impact of climate change.

"But it is the poor, in Africa and developing small island states and elsewhere, who will suffer the most, even though they are the least responsible for global warming."

Experts say Africa is the least emitter of the greenhouse gases blamed for rising temperatures, but due to its poverty, under development and geography, has the least to lose under dire predictions of wrenching change to weather patterns.

Deadly flooding swept the Indian and the shrinking of Mount Kilimanjaro's snow cap have become potent symbols in Africa of the global environment crisis.

UN environment agencies have been lobbying Ban to play a leading role in the hope his commitment to the Kyoto Protocol on curbing greenhouse gases, which expires in 2012).

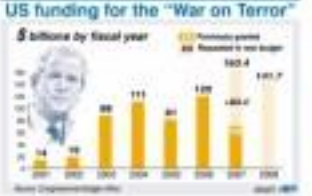
Ringing in the start of this game at Monday's start of talks attended by nearly 100 nations was last week's warning by a UN panel that there was a more than 90 percent chance a human's worst-behind vision of the warming in the past few decades.

Governments are under huge pressure to act on the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which foresees more storms, droughts, heatwaves and rising seas.

Reuters

Bush seeks more funds for Iraq, Afghan wars

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH presented the US Congress with a mammoth $716.5 billion budget request Monday to fund wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and pay for a major expansion of the US military.



Bush's defense budget, unveiled as part of a larger government budget plan for fiscal 2008, seeks to acquire more troops, warships and aircraft for a force strained by the 4-year-old war in Iraq.

The budget request came in three pieces—$481.4 billion for the Pentagon's 2008 base budget, $141.7 billion for the "global war on terrorism" in 2008, and $93.4 billion to cover additional war costs in this current fiscal year to Sept.30.

The huge spending package counts usual spiking demands for US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, which military leaders have warned are putting at risk the Pentagon's ability to meet challenges elsewhere in the world.

"The warriors we dispatch to defend should be at the level to adequately meet the challenges of the global strategic environment the United States faces today," said Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

But Representative Jo Ann Emerson, chair of the House Armed Services, said the sums involved were "staggering." "We cannot provide an adequate national defense on the cheap, but neither can we afford to simply ratify the president's request without overhauling the size, shape and oversight our counterterrorism capacity," he said.

It marked the first time the administration has sent Congress its annual budget request in February, instead of the presidential inauguration in January. The change was ordered by Congress to give lawmakers more time to review the spending plans.

Bush's budget request also includes $70 billion for the Iraq reconstruction fund, which was used previously to fund operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Defense Department comptroller Tina Jonas said the Pentagon's calculations were based on the assumption of 140,000 troops in Iraq and 20,000 in Afghanistan, which is one number prior to those policy changes that were made on the surge," she said.

AFP

Ex-NY mayor Giuliani joins race for White House

GIULIANI

WASHINGTON—FORMER NEW York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who guided his city through the Sept. 11 attacks, threw his hat in the 2008 presidential race Monday, saying an extension he won't be that to win.

"We will have to formally announce and do a few more things. But this is about as done as you get" on entering the race, Giuliani told Fox News.

Asked if he is "in it to win it,"—the phrase used by New York Senator Hillary Clinton when she announced her White House run last month—Giuliani answered: "Gosh yeah. That's the only reason to do it." "I'm in this to win ... My campaign is going to be about the future," he added.

Giuliani, who earned the nickname "America's Mayor" after leading New York through the trauma of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, has led other likely candidates for the Republican presidential nomination in recent polls.

Another Monday he took a key step in the race when he filed an official statement of candidacy with the Federal Election Commission.

His chance rival for the Republican nomination is Arizona Senator John McCain, who has also filed FEC papers but has not publicly declared he is joining the race.

Recent opinion polls have this latest leading McCain by a slim margin for the Republican nomination, with Newt Gingrich, the former speaker of the House of Representatives, in third position.

Other declared Republican hopefuls in 2008 include Kansas Senator Sam Brownback, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee.

The nominations for both parties will be decided in a series of state-based contests and primaries beginning next January, with the election itself in November.

Giuliani could face an old foe if he becomes the Republican nominee in 2008, with New York Senator Hillary Clinton reportedly considered the favorite for the Democratic party's nomination.

AFP

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Malasdrao

■ Shaq is back, powers Heat against Bobcats /A26

Comets avert sweep; Sparks up

By Jaymee M. Paye

ALL OF A SUDDEN, MAILAND *More*—its slumping star included—is back to its dominating form in the PBL Silver Cup.

The Comets spoiled a Hapee-PCU sweep by coming to a 74-62 victory in Game 3 of their best-of-five semifinal series yesterday at the Ola cruise College Sports Center.

And all it took to stop Alex was a proper introduction.

"I told them in the dugout that this is not a series that we're down 2-0, approach it just a usual game as there's no pressure," said coach Lawrence Chongson.

That, and a little mental nudge that awoke a sleeping giant.

Coloyan's defense, JR Quiñahan made up for his previous four poor performances with 11 points, six rebounds, five assists and three blocks.

"We played mind games with him but to motivate him," said Chongson. "We also designed a play especially for him."

Earlier, Toyota Otis moved within a win of its rubber finals stint at 2-1 after a 77-63 triumph against Harbour Centre in their own series.

Marcio Cruz overcame a leading back and shoulder to lead the Sparks to a late-game onslaught that featured a daz 19-10 edge to a 12-point spread, 67-55, at the final two minutes.

Chito Jalmo, a before-4 standout from the ABAA Computer University, also entered for the Sparks by firing seven of his nine points in the final period.

While Chongson talked his team into snapping out of a spell, Toyota his coach Louie Alas dipped his lips and let his words plow their game.

"Same was a revelation," said Toyota Otis coach Louie Alas. "We had no hurdle in the pregame. I thought I might be over-coaching them. I told them to just do their thing."

Seven-shooting Patrick Catubay drilled in 17 points, while Cruz delivered 16 rockets.

"If at least three of our players finished to double figures, we always have a good chance," said Alas.

Mail and Mier blew the game with open in the second period with Illinois, Ronny Rumah and Jason Ballesteros swapping for a 36-21 halftime lead. (The career in first solution halves!

The Bank Masters avoided back-rubbin errors, 58-51, but the Comets responded with a run capped by triple from Bruce and Mister Bigfoot for a 68-51 gap heading into the crucial minutes.

TOYOTA Otis' Jonathan Aldave (left) disputes the rebound with Harbour Centre's Ryan Arcilla (foreground) and another Port Master in the final quarter of the two teams' semifinal encounter at the Ola cruise Sports Center Gym in Pasaig city yesterday. Spiker Marcio Cruz rose to the occasion again as the Sparks blasted the Port Masters, 77-68, for a 2-1 lead in the semifinal series.

The scores

A triumph of faith, of good over evil

MEN'S EYES POINT HOME

Of course, there was no open cry-ing—only open eyes of joy.

There had never been a scene like it in Philippine basketball.

No, not even in the golden era—the 50s and the 60s—when the Philippines would regularly assess Asian basketball titles during the reign of the great Caloy Loyzaga.

Old they cry when the Philippines captured the lucrative medal in the 1954 World Basketball Championship, but think over by a team from Asia, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil?

Maybe not. But at 2:30 in the afternoon on Monday, grieving men endowed, others with redemption fans, while a host let out a quiet scream, holding back tears.

* * *

Yes, too, many have had the same career: remember a few times inside a rowdy house.

Monday, there was the return of the happy-ending at the ballroom of the Dusit Hotel in Makati.

Yeah, this was it.

In the first place, there should never—never again, please—be a repeat of the painful period when the fate of Philippine basketball was put in the balance.

Amateur basketball here should never again be left in the hands of selfish figures who manifest already forgotten to determine had from good.

* * *

While basketball has been elevated to the status of a religion by many lovers abroad, the past two years were empty and faithless.

After the international basketball federation, Fiba, dropped a suspension on the Philippines for a monumental leadership mess, all the basketball happenings were reduced to worship inside a godless cathedral.

It was worse than playing inside an empty arena screaming, unanswered.

They all kept running, running—for there was no exact place to run to.

BARE EYE

Hiccup Trinidad

* * *

Yes, a street survey by the laymen exactly showed how deeply devotees cared for their favorite game here.

It's no exaggeration to say that prayers did play a very vital part in the staging of the reunion.

They're now also as way we could overemphasize the golden exile of Manuel V. Pangilinan in achieving ultimate triumph.

In fact, Fiba secretary general Patrick Baumann, who went out of his way to assure the Philippines of a return in the International basketball scene, dogged out MVP as "one with the Midas touch."

* * *

There were golden moments out there Monday.

While the national basketball scene had crowded with villains, there suddenly was a prevalence of heroes.

While Pangilinan evidently did everything—from preparing his team, funding, coaching it and setting an overt general during his several meetings with the officials—there were many others who tried to score the victory basket.

Go Teng Kok, secretary to team, kept his word and backed the SBP group to the Unity Congress.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada showed up, spoke briefly, and was applauded for his role in the concession.

There was no way to measure the immense role played by PBA commissioner Noli Eala in the epic win feat.

There were also Jaime Cojuangco, Butch Antonio, and other gentlemen who decided to rise to the background despite their great contributions.

* * *

We had to muddle long and thank Nite Gaston, who resigned as BAP director and spokesman at the height of the leadership tug-of-war to show the noble makings a true good-hearting heroism.

Of course, there was evident despondency on the part of the others SBP see gun Gendaucl ast after he was rejected in his bid to wangle the powerful executive directorship of the newly formed national basketball commission.

What a day! Long live our heroes.

The monster is shackled, good has triumphed over evil.

* * *

CHOICE: Prayers please for Akiatsan Dingle, a former newspaper boy who fought his way to become one of the legends of Philippine sportswriting. An inspiration to succeeding generation soldiers, Dingle, with a chaste, compelling style, passed on last week at 75. He will be interred at the Mandaluyong Memorial Park. (E-ps. today Goodbye, my idol and friend.)

Top choices for tough job

Who will be RP basketball's powerful, day-to-day boss?

By Jane Navarro

JUST A DAY AFTER BEING 'V' POSTS

Soon ensconced that there were no preordained names in the Basketball Association of the Philippines-Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (BAP-SBP) search for an executive-director, names have started to spread to boss an unofficial list of considerations.

Curiously, most of the names were involved with the Philippine Basketball Association scene point in their careers.

Sources said former PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino, former PBA player Nilo Gaston and former Fiba finance officer Ricky Palou have been floated by various sources for the post of executive director, the working arm of an association.

The person named is in that post is tasked with handling the day-to-day duties of the association.

Philippine Basketball League Commissioner Chino Trinidad, a former sportswriter who covered the pro league, and FLIT executive Al Panlilio, a former alternate governor for Talk N Text in the Fiba board, were among the names identified by lo-cators sources as those who are also being considered by the unified body.

Philippine Olympic Committee spokesperson Joey Romasanta, Mindanao Basketball Association Commissioner Ernesto Echavez and former Filipino basketball president Bonie Tiongco are also in the stylized list.

Pangilinan, the SBP-UCP president, is also looking at the possibility of installing a foreigner as executive director.

Pangilinan said the international basketball federation (Fiba) secretary general Patrick Baumann actually broached the idea of designating a non-Filipino as executive director on an interim basis.

"The Fiba would be open to this. And I hope it doesn't arouse too much criticism if we engage someone outside of our shores to help us out," said Pangilinan.

"So long as it's an interim position and would eventually some down with a Filipino. The point is we have to choose the right guy."

Pressed for a name during the past Unity Congress press conference, Pangilinan declared that "there was no preordained name" for the powerful position.

But, he added, the SBP has "to look for an executive director as soon as practical."

Meanwhile, the POC has initiated a move to fast-track the accreditation of the BAP-SBP with the national Olympic body.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco has called for a special assembly scheduled on Feb. 10 to consider the accreditation of the new national sports association for basketball.

"It is expected that after the president's report to the body Mr. Pangilinan will be invited into the general assembly and moves in as a member of the POC," said POC deputy secretary-general Steve Hontiveros.

After the general assembly, the department of the POC will be transmitted to the Files for the lifting of the country's suspension, along with the key documents that led to the formation of the new sage body.

TRINIDAD

BERNARDINO

ALCOSEBA

RP Cuppers: Cheer for us, we'll deliver

SUPPORT US AND WE WILL DELIVER.

That's the plea and promise made by the Philippine Youth Cup team yesterday.

Powered by a pair of world-ranked FIBA tournament standouts, the RP squad, which has already conquered by two records Secretary-general, salutes, the Philippines is tapped to do well against Pakistan in their solo Oceania Zone Group 2 in an all-day workout at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

United States-based Cyril Manalo and Ian Bales as well as PF Dante and Johnny Revilla, face the Pakistanis in their bid to climb back to Group I next year.

The Filipinos, coached by Manila Mist and Navy mentor Suarez, are hoping to see the same overall support they got during the Manila SEA Games in 2005 when they emerged as champions.

"It's getting down each year," said the 29-year-old Manalo, referring to the meets he's in Group I this next year. "This is the progress of Philippine tennis. The environment is building up."

"We're at a very high level right now—we're out to make a statement we're in good shape we're eager, we're hungry," added Manalo, ranked No. 1,016 in ATP. Also playing the PSA Tennis in Remedios Restaurant in Manila.

"We expect a lot of big things this year and hopefully this is the start," added Bales, at 2-1 still at the prime of his career.

The Pakistanis, despite their unfamiliarity with the SMTC confines, are no pushovers as they are also coming in from Group I.

The Islamic-based team is scheduled tomorrow at the Century Park hotel on Vito Cruz, Manila. The first seven singles matches will be played Friday, the doubles on Saturday and the reverse singles on Sunday. Admission is free.

Making up the Pakistani squad are Agad Abdul Rauf, Aqeel Khan, Aisam-Ul-Haq Qureshi, Asim Shafik, Yusuf Jauch a Fayyad Ul Haq and team manager is Iftikhar Ahmad Riaz.

Roy Cruz

Philippine Economic Zone Authority

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF PCEA FORMS
(1st & 2nd Batches only)

1. The PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (PEZA), through its Corporate Budget for the CY 2001 intends to apply the sum of PhP 10,000,000.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the Supply and Delivery of PEZA Forms as detailed in the Terms of Reference (TOR) hereof and more particularly described in this opening.

2. The PEZA now invites qualified firms for Philippine Bidders to the following contract:

Contract Description	Quantity (pads)
Form No. 0101 – Import Permit	5,000
Form No. 0102 – Export Permit	11,000
Form No. 0103 – Application for Permit to Bring Goods from the Customs Territory into the Zone	5,000
Form No. 0104 – Application for Permit to Bring Goods Out of the Zone	10,000
Form No. 0105 – Application for Permit to Bring Goods into the Customs Territory from the Zone	1,000
Form No. 0106 – Application for Withdrawal Permit, Duty Free Shop Sales Slip	5,000
Form No. 0107 – Application for Permit to Sell Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives	1,000
Authority to Withdraw	5,000
Boat Permit	2,000
Form No. 0112 – Official Receipt	5,000
PEZA Personalized Official Receipt (continuous form)	10,000

Delivery of the GOODS is required within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the effectivity of the Notice to Proceed (NTP) of the eligible Bidder in accordance to Section 3 of this Bidding Documents, TOR.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using competitive bidding as specified in Republic Act (RA) 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part II (With Art. of Republic Act 9184 R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Philippine citizens/corporations or associations under the laws of the Philippines, duly registered and engaged in Philippine business, as contained in Republic Act 5183 of R.A. 5183 and Section 5 of the Corporation Code of the Philippines, and qualified to participate in the procurement of the contract duly registered with the Philippine Board of Investments (BOI) and/or the Philippine Export Zone Authority (PEZA) and/or the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) and/or the Philippine Tourism Authority (PT

Red Bull, SMB seek finals slot

Guiao, Jarencio fined; suspension put on hold

GENE TESO | Manila Collegian
Layout — Rachel Grace Miguel

THE ODDS ARE ABOUT EVEN for two teams going into the win-or-go-home semifinals match of the PBA Philippine Cup.

Even for a best-of-seven series that has adhered mostly to a trend, the numbers are desperately now when Red Bull goes up against San Miguel Beer for the last Finals berth at 7 p.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Bisons are coming off a highly emotional and physical Game 6 win, 119-110, last Sunday and hope to seal a victory that will send them into a championship match against Talk-n-Text Tropang Texters.

The Kings took the first shot at closing out Talk 'N Text, 4-2, on a 90-89 Game 6 victory last Sunday.

The Texters hosted the opener of best-of-seven Smart Gilas on the 6th seed of 5-6 Coca-Cola Tigers via an 89-86 victory last Sunday.

"I have to give a lot of credit to my coaching staff," told Guiao. "I think their coaching percentage is so high that I feel like I'm not needed anymore. Credit to the boys also for shutting me."

Guiao watched the remaining two quarters from the locker room. He was praised by special four-time quarters more from the bench because of the suspension slapped on him but got a reprieve from the Commissioner's Office.

"It's rewarded a player has been ejected with less [a technical foul]," said one of those To him. Sota considered in his Regional video-taker during review, the official's will have to immediately serve the suspension," told technical chief Pete Mendoza.

That the commissioners think Eric's talking pro-serve the to-serve of the final and in fine, and

GUIAO: Fined P 20,000

JARENCIO: P50,000

the suppressor of Barangay's Game 7, agencies done the serving of the suspension."

The incident merged San Miguel Beer assistant coach Ildefonso Jarencio, who angrily confronted Guiao. Jarencio got away without to coached had even after showing referee Mario Montiel.

Jarencio was slapped a P50,000 fine and Guiao a P20,000 penalty. Jarencio was also to suspended and will serve out his punishment after Game 7.

The Brewers took Game 1 (114-109), Game 3 (109-92) and Game 5 (112-92), while the Texters won Game 2 (108-84), Game 4 (109-107) and Game 6 (104-101).

Talk 'N Text guard Mark Caidesa was also slapped a one-game suspension and fined P20,000 for kicking Gimbel's Brandy Talbot last Sunday. Antonio M. Pigos

Pacman fights again with Viloria in Texas

MANNY PACQUIAO DRIVES HOME THE AGGRESSIVE ATTACK AGAINST Juan Antonio Rivera.

It was in the courtroom area where the Filipino superstar produced his most sensational straight right-hand punch of the night to score a knockdown in the fourth round of the bout. Pacquiao connected a right hook to the head of Rivera, who was already hurt by a barrage of punches from the Filipino boxer.

Rivera fell to the canvas and after the Filipino superstar produced his most sensational straight right-hand punch of the night to score a knockdown in the fourth round of the bout. Pacquiao connected a right hook to the head of Rivera, who was already hurt by a barrage of punches from the Filipino boxer.

Rivera fell to the canvas and after the referee counted to nine, he was saved by the bell. Pacquiao would then go on to finish the job in the fifth round, forcing the referee to stop the fight at 1:45 of the round.

Pacquiao (49-3-2, 37 KOs) entered the ring as the heavier fighter, weighing in at 145 pounds, while Rivera (32-3-1, 22 KOs) tipped the scales at 143 pounds.

Pacquiao was also the aggressor in the first round, but Rivera was able to land a few solid punches of his own.

Pacquiao was able to take control of the fight in the second round, however, as he was able to land a number of solid punches to the head of Rivera.

Pacquiao continued to pressure Rivera in the third round, and was able to land a number of solid punches to the head of Rivera.

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Pacquiao continued to pressure Rivera in the third round, and was able to land a number of solid punches to the head of Rivera.

HEADED! Pacquiao (right) lands a devastating right on Marco Antonio Barrera in their unforgettable November 2003 encounter at the Alamodome.

Gerard, JR begin Pro-Am title defense

THEIR LAST VICTORY IN THE Boston Minute Invitational Pro-Am was finally in the bag for Mike Miles and Jaydee Gerard Custodio and JR Tampico will try to retain their title in a more convincing manner.

Renewing their partnership that had netted them straight championships since 2005, Custodio and Tampico will again lead a star-studded field tuning off at the Forum's Longer in Ortigas, Cento, today.

Custodio, a rushing pro at Wah Wah, came out of his way to host Tampico by his side again.

"I had to settle conference links to plead to his school officials so that our team will remain intact, at least for another year," said Custodio of Tampico, who took a break from his studies at the San Diego Golf Academy in California. "Thank God, JR's been rewarded."

The wife-holder Custodio, whose team Gerald Standee ended up second to the recent Philippine Open won by Freddie Mihara, and Tampico swept the last three of the Mikael Conference Cup, which was revived in 2001 by Mike and CEO/Chief/Pro Bruce.

Last year, however, Custodio and Tampico have to go through the savages, rallying from four shots down in the last eight holes to nip the pair of Richard Quinsay and Marvin Dumandan by one stroke for the crown.

Still Gerard and Erwin Vistan, two of the 2005 revival tournament, followed by brothers Raul and Raul Mendoza in 2002 before Custodio and Tampico began their winning streak in 2003.

A brand-new Avanza, Toyota's latest model, will be dangled as a hole-in-one prize in the series ending Saturday.

A total of P1.7 million is up for grabs in the tournament adopting a one-ball four-man format. Ilip Lacerna

BEACH VOLLEYBELLES: Volleyballers Jhoie Ivy Bernasconi Barroga, Maryanne Calleja, Ms. June Christine Perez, Ms. Lourdes Patiano and Silvana Rose Tovar strike a pose as they are presented at yesterday's PSA Sports Features at Pandan Restaurant in Manila. The players pictured are setter Feb. 8 and Fivestar Power Ladies Beach Volleyball tournament at Clearwater Country Club in Clark Field, Pampanga. The competition's 2007 edition may include Filipino-Americans and a stopover either Cebu or Iloilo.

Finn tops 2 of 3 special Asian Formula 3 races

RENNI KARJALAINEN OF FINLAND DOVE to two victories in Team Goddard, managed by Asian Formula Three director Mark Goddard, dominated the first three rounds of the AFG Fuelix Series recently at the Zhuhai International Circuit in Guangdong, China.

Karjalainen, who also saw action in last year's AFG Grand Prix, finished ahead of Indonesian Sebastian Ahmad and Filipino Jeffrey Lee Pascua, topped the qualifying race and went on to stamp his mark in the first two rounds. He retired for early lead in the drivers' standings with 42 points.

Britain Oliver Turvey, driving for Walkin Tire Racing with Theodore, finished second in the first two races and third in the last race, where Karjalainen crashed out, to also post 42 points.

The Asian Series moves to Sepang held to open the Group drivers a training ground for the 2007 AFG Circuit that will start in November.

Karjalainen and Turvey stood 12 points ahead of AFG veteran Dillon Rumaisa of Indonesia who posted three fourth place finishes.

The opening three rounds of the series drew drivers, including Sweden's Philip Persson and Australia Mikko Grabmueller of Asian Racing, Indonesian Marino Sorgoyudo of Fujitsu, Brad Jo of Hong Kong who drove for Team Goddard, Rufino Jones Ubiñada of Speedtech Asia and Britain Jens Tucon of Team Goddard.

The next three rounds of the series are slated March 15-16 in Melbourne, Australia, on a support race for the Australian Formula One.

DB-Makati five nips DB-Manda for Tangkad Sagad cage crown

GEMMIC UBALA AND JOHN IVAN GLENDANG hit crossmen packed free throws in the shootout stage, showing Don Bosco Makati past Don Bosco Mandaluyong, 26-26, to capture the Chester Tangkad Sagad Basketball Tournament Sunday at the Mandaluyong Sports Park gym.

Ubala and Glendang powered the game-long performance of John Paolo Rosal, who topped scoring with 12 points for the Makati cloblikers of coach Rommel Bustig in the 12-under 5-on-5 title clash.

The five-house forged the closer-was after the regulation period had ended at 26-all.

Jessel Gumapac led the Mandaluyong squad of mentor Glen Dioon Fidelo with 11 markers.

In the semifinal round of last year supported by Adidas, Don Bosco-Makati edged Maria School, 21-18, while Don Bosco-Mandaluyong ousted International Christian School, 23-16.

The brand to succeed the trophies Gold medals to the winners were Chester product manager Yuri Meneses, tournament director Armando "Ace" Bautista, Bernard Gumapac and other Chester officials.

23rd Mango Tee unfurls at Alabang

ACCA president Johnny Castillo hits the instrumental drive as former President Ramos (right) looks on.

THE HUNT FOR FOUR MITSUBISHI cars, golf carts and other major prizes are under at Forbes Town and treasurement prizes in the Mango Tee Invitational starts today with the first batch of players teeing off at the Alabang Country Club.

Lucky are makers in the 18-hole tournament co-presented by Philippine Duck and Smart Communications and spread over five days will drive home a Lancer 2.0 GT and Yamaha cart up for grabs on the club hole, an 1,200 Honda GLX and a Club Car on No. 6, a Galant 2.4Gls and a Golf Cruiser on the 12th and a Grandis 2.4 Gls and an Eclipse 2.4 GS from Mitsubishi Motors and Celebrities.

There are on top of a Yamaha cart, a 32-inch LCD television, golf items, appliances and online tickets worth more than P1 million that will be settled off during the awards ceremony on Sunday.

Former president Fidel V. Ramos, ACCA president Johnny Castillo and Mango Tee executive Atoki Ed Garcia head the big cast of members attending today.

Also playing are Finance Secretary Gary Teves, Transportation Secretary and PCSO president Leandro Mendoza, National Treasurer Omar Cruz, Philippine Duck CEO Saul Pedrigal, president Jose Lina, and Federation Golf president Jose Antonio.

Ramos and 16 other sponsors and VIPs hit the ceremonial driver fairways to formally open the tournament. Keeping tradition will be held for the duration of the competition, according to general manager Cynthia Mateo.

To be departed are the low gross and low net players and the top awards in four handicap divisions. Handicap brackets are set at 8-15, 16-23, and 24-32 pts.

First Gent Golf Cup fires off Feb. 27

FOUR FOUNDATIONS WILL BENEFIT FROM the first tournament conducted golf tournament slated Feb. 27 at the Manila Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong City.

The fund-raising tournament is organized for the fourth time in five years by the First Gentleman's Foundation, Inc. of lawyer Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

The four beneficiaries, personally selected by the two, are the Philippine Bamboo Foundation, Lyric Opera Foundation Philippines, Rotary Club of Makati Central Foundation, and the Alay sa Kapwa Foundation.

The tournament seeks to bring together golf enthusiasts from the government and public sectors to Guardianship programs for the event is the FG Cup Secretariat headed by Edgardo C. Manalo and Benjamin V. Ramos.

The Alay sa Kapwa Foundation extends help to soldiers and other military institutions and their families, while the Rotary Club of Makati Central Foundation supports social, civic and economic activities that improve the quality of the disadvantaged and the overall welfare of society.

ARROYO

Chicago's Luol Deng slams the ball in a loss to Utah.

SPORTS

Shaq's back, powers Heat against Bobcats

MIAMI—DWYANE WADE scored 27 points and Shaquille O'Neal had his best scoring performance since returning from knee surgery to lead the Miami Heat to a 113-93 victory over the Charlotte Bobcats on Monday night.

O'Neal, who missed 32 games, hit his first four shots and scored 15 first-half points en route to 20 overall. He finished with 22 points and was one of six players to double figures.

The Heat played without point guard Jason Williams, suspended by the league following his ejection for arguing with officials during Saturday's win at Milwaukee. Rookie Chris Quinn made his first career start and finished with 14 points.

Emeka Okafor scored 20 points, and Raefer Alston and Gerald Wallace each scored 19 for the Bobcats.

In other games, it was LA Lakers 99, Atlanta 88; Golden State 113, Indiana 99; Washington 116, Seattle 106; Philadelphia 106, New Jersey 98; OKC Hornets 108, Minnesota 77; Phoenix 113, Boston 106; Utah 110, Chicago 95; Sacramento 109, New Orleans 99.

Meanwhile, New York's Stan Johnson will defend his title in the NBA All-Star Slam Dunk contest against three first-time entrants, the league announced Monday.

Boston's Gerald Green, Orlando's Dwight Howard and Chicago's Tyrus Thomas will also compete for the crown February 17 at Las Vegas in the annual showdown of high-flying, ball-spinning acrobatic jaw-droppers.

The field would mirror on the eve of the NBA/BBALAE Star Game at the Orlando gambling haven.

Many of the league's top stars have elected not to compete in the event in recent years, intimidating the impact of an event whose past winners include Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Vince Carter and Dominique Wilkins. AFP

SACRAMENTO center Brad Miller (left) kicked a shot off the basket by three New Orleans defenders. The Kings defeated the Hornets, 109-99.

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Henin feels it's time to move forward, sets tennis comeback

PARIS—JUSTINE HENIN REFUSES TO TALK about her marital split but said how Monday that she was just glad to be getting back on the tennis court.

Henin has not played since the WTA Championships in Madrid in November, where she defeated Nicole Vaidisova in the final to take over the world No. 1 ranking. last month's Australian Open due to personal reasons. Also revealed to be the split from husband Pierre-Yves Hardouin.

She will make her competitive comeback later in the week and denies was adamant the only thing she wanted to talk about on her return.

"This has been a hard time, a painful time but all I want to talk about is my tennis," said the 24-year-old Belgian, currently number two in the world behind Australian Open finalist Ekaterina.

"We all go through hard times and this will pass me sooner, that's me right and I ask you to accept it.

"I'm very happy to be back here in Paris and competing again. There are things that I'll keep to myself."

Henin followed the Australian Open loss who and returned to training during the first Grand Slam of the season, where she had reached the final in 2006.

She was initially planning a return to action in Dubai in two weeks time but said she felt that would have kept her out of the game for too long.

"I started training again during the Australian Open. I wanted to see how it was going. It was too long to wait for Dubai so when I had the chance of coming to Paris, I thought I have to get back down."

Henin enjoyed her best season ever in 2006, reaching 10 finals from 13 tournaments—winning six—and reaching all four Grand Slam finals, winning in Roland Garros for the third time before also claiming the end of season Championships.

And she is keen to continue in that rich vein, even though her tennis has started badly losing cup spot in the world, missing the first month of competition and doubted by personal and emotional issues.

But she still has a lot of ambition left and is determined to pick up one title that has always eluded her. AFP

VICTORY SPEECH
Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning addresses the crowd during a victory rally in Indianapolis that celebrated the team's Super Bowl triumph. The Colts defeated the Chicago Bears to win Super Bowl XLI.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

PC BUYER'S GUIDE

Inflation eased further to 3.9% in January

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo reacts in apology as she prematurely rings the bell while Francis Lim, president of the Philippine Stock Exchange, and Vice President Noli de Castro look on during the listing ceremony of subscription stocks of Filinvest Corp. and bell-ringing at the PSE in Makati City.

Lowest since Nov. '03

By Michelle V. Rosca

CONSUMER PRICES ROSE 3.9 PERCENT LAST month from a year ago, the slowest inflation rate since November 2003, as all commodities except clothing recorded a decelerated increase in prices.

The January rate was the low-end of the 3.9- to-4.6-percent forecast made by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. Last December, the inflation rate stood at 4.2 percent.

"The 3.9-percent inflation rate further confirms a benign inflation outlook. It provides additional flexibility for monetary policy," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters.

At the Jan. 25 meeting of the policy-making Monetary Board, the BSP decided to maintain its key policy rate at 7.5 percent in the belief there was no substantial inflationary pressure that should instill a higher interest rate.

The BSP uses its key policy rate as a tool to control inflation. As it seems to its borrowing costs, commercial banks reduce deposit rates of their funds in the central bank, thus reducing money in circulation. In return, this results in increased growth in demand for consumables and slows inflation down.

The National Statistics Office yesterday reported that the annual inflation rate for food, beverage and tobacco decelerated to 4.6 percent in January from 5.1 percent in December last year.

Peso rallies to 48.50 to $1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY RALLIED to a six-year high of 48.50 before closing at 48.560 against the dollar as Asian currencies were boosted by expectations that this week's G7 meeting of the world's richest nations will prompt Japan to address concerns on the yen's weakness.

The peso, now trading at its strongest level since hitting 48.44 on March 20, 2001, yesterday gained another 20.5 centavos from Monday's closing of 48.71 to the dollar. Volume at the open foreign exchange market Philippine Dealing System Holdings Corp. was $920.184 million.

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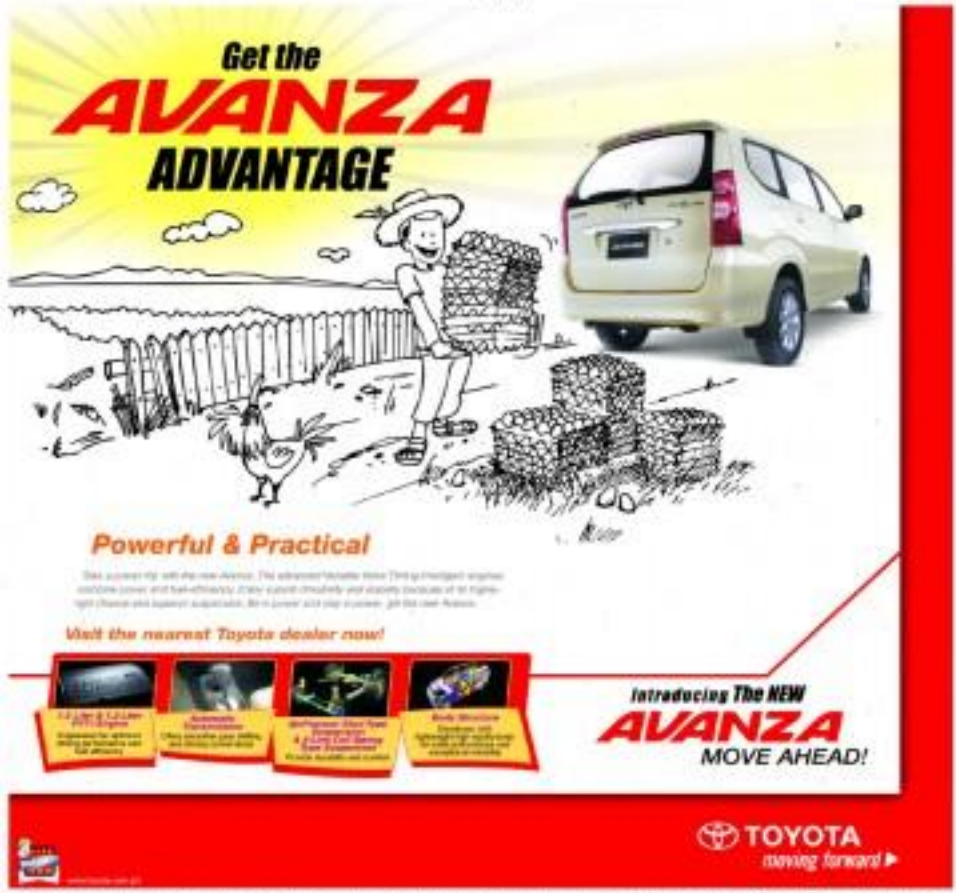
CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

STOCK MARKET

Shares close lower



Treasury unit offers ₱50-B bond swap

With the offer, gov't hopes to provide bond market with better benchmarks

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU OF THE TREASURY YESTERDAY offered another bond swap to existing holders of domestically issued Treasury bonds.

In a statement, the BTr said investors holding certain outstanding government securities that would mature anytime between March 1, 2007 and Feb. 21, 2012 are invited to exchange these for either the new 3-year or 5-year benchmark bonds.

The BTr said the swap would run until Feb. 15.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said participation in the bond swap was voluntary. Terms of the bond swap, such as interest rates, to be imposed on the new bonds, will be determined by a separate auction for the 3- and 5-year new bonds.

The BTr said it was hoping to swap P50 billion worth of new 3-year bonds, and P20 billion for the bank 5-year bonds.

The swap is part of the country's debt consolidation program which was started last year. One aim is to provide the bond market with better benchmarks.

Also, under a bond swap, the government is able to stretch the average maturity of its debt and reduce the cost of its borrowings.

A swap stretches the average maturity of the government's debt because an investor who holds a government security, one that will mature in a few months for instance, is induced to swap this for a new 3- or 5-year bond.

The last bond swap was said to have stretched the average maturity of the government's debt by 0.7 years.

A swap reduces the government's borrowing cost because the bonds issued usually have slightly lower interest rates than the rates imposed on the old bonds. The BTr said the government raised P49 billion last year due to lower-than-expected borrowing costs resulting from the bond swaps.

Cruz said a bond swap benefits investors because it provides them with liquidity in the domestic capital market. Those who hold fresh bonds, considered as benchmark bonds, are able to sell these instruments easier in the secondary market.

The swap helps boosts liquidity because the fresh 3-year bonds, for instance, then will be swapped by the government for investors' older issues. Therefore, old government securities that had been issued under different series would soon fall under one series.

"The 3-year and 5-year benchmarks are viewed as important reference points to provide reliable and credible benchmarks for investors," Cruz said in the statement. "Liquid benchmarks on the whole ease and lower the cost of borrowings by providing overall domestic liquidity and limited reliance of supply."

The BTr said Credit Suisse First Boston would still be the government's financial adviser for the bond swap. — With a report from Reuters

More foreign funds seen to flow to RP mine sector

By Christine A. Guyloan

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS in the country's mining sector next year is expected to reach $1.6 billion as more projects advance to the production stage, government and industry officials said.

The world's fourth-largest copper producer Xstrata Plc this year will start three high-investment projects worth $560 million, and further increase their investments threefold in 2008, said Hamish Ramsay, director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, which is a unit of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The bulk of the investments coming in next year will be spent by Xstrata on its Tampakan copper project, Ramsay said.

The Switzerland-based company last month acquired Australian company Indophil Resources NL. Philippine unit, which has rights to explore Southeast Asia's biggest untapped copper deposit in South Cotabato.

Developing the mine may cost as much as $1.4 billion, Indophil said in a recent disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange.

"The mining boom will start this year," DENR Secretary Angelo Reyes said, adding that this could even grow in 2008.

Mining investments in 2006 totaled $1.09 million, the Mines Bureau data showed.

Another mining project in the pipeline is Australia's Oceana Gold Ltd, which took over Climax Mining Ltd.'s mineral claims in the Didipio copper-gold project in Nueva Vizcaya. Oceana Gold said last month it would spend $100 million in building an open-pit mine and processing plant.

Reyes also cited the production of Nickel Mining Cumulo dated and Development Corp. after it completed the $300-million rehabilitation of its Toledo mine in Cebu, which used to be the biggest coal mine in East Asia.

RP steps up export to 4 nations

THE VOLUME OF PHILIPPINE exports to the world's growth engines—Brazil, Russia, India and China—is very encouraging, as local firms recognize the huge potential of their booming economies, according to accounting and tax advisory firm Punongbayan & Araullo.

Also known as the BRIC economies, the four countries are the fastest growing economies worldwide, and are expected to collectively account for 44 percent of global output by 2050.

Citing results of a latest survey by Grant Thornton International, of which P&A is a member, the firm said exports to the BRIC countries showed a strong rebound as the proportion of businesses exporting rose to 36 percent, signaling that more companies are exporting.

P&A said the jump in Philippine export volumes was not tied only to those of Hong Kong, whose shipments are mainly sent to mainland China and India.

Grant Thornton's yearly International Business Report, formerly known as the International Business Owners Survey, covered medium to large private enterprises based in the Philippines, starting in 2004 when results showed that 33 percent of local enterprises surveyed reported that they do export, slightly below the global average of 35 percent.

In 2005, the Philippines placed significantly below the global average in the proportion of exporting businesses with only 26 percent. Those exporting, the Philippines placed third in the bottom five countries with businesses exporting.

P&A managing partner and chief executive Cleto Navarro said local businesses were not fully aware of opportunities in the BRIC countries, "so this year's results indicated that the Philippines is considerably placing to the top five exporters in the BRIC countries."

Ronnel W. Domingo

Coco yield seen to slide this year

By Ronnel W. Domingo

DOMESTIC OUTPUT OF COCONUT is expected to slide by 8.9 percent this year due to a series of strong typhoons that ravaged producing regions in the latter part of 2006, according to the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines.

The industry umbrella group also said export volumes were seen to decline by 18.9 percent, with substantial reductions in shipments of the sector's major exports such as coconut oil, copra meal and desiccated coconut.

Uriap estimated the yield in 2007 at 2.26 million metric tons in copra terms. Total output last year was expected to have reached 2.46 million MT.

"Much of the decline in production would be observed in the second half of this year, particularly during the last quarter," the group said.

At the same time, aggregate output of major coconut-based products might only reach only 1.653 million MT from an estimated total volume of 2.96 million MT in 2006.

Shipments of coconut oil was projected to reach 750,000 MT. Export of desiccated coconut is expected to hit 165,000 MT.

Uriap said the industry was anticipating a tight supply of husked nuts, which are the main material used by desiccators. Bert Lanes of Southern Tagalog and the Visayas were the hardest hit regions last year.

Last December, the Philippine Coconut Authority reported that some 196,000 coconut farmers lost about P734.4 million in damaged coconut trees due to Typhoon Seniang that ravaged southern Luzon in late November 2006.

PCA data show that some 42.6-0 million coconut trees were damaged, most of which were in the Bicol region.

The agency further reported that 32.9 million or 79.5 percent of the affected trees were those in the Bicol region. This represents about a tenth of the country's 300 million coconut trees.

PCA said that about 1.3 million trees were "totally damaged," while about a quarter of the total—some 11.3 million trees—were "heavily damaged."

Gov't spent ₱13.81B in subsidies to state-owned firms

2006 level up 12.8% from previous year's ₱12.23B

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SPENT P13.81 billion in 2006 as subsidies to state-owned firms, or 12.8 percent more than the P12.23 billion it allocated to public corporations the previous year.

The growing state subsidies to government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), which ideally should be self-supporting, was the reason the Department of Finance wanted to implement measures to improve their financial performance.

The government provides subsidies to state-owned firms to support their operations and services that could not be secured because of its cash shortages in a given period.

Documents from the DOF showed that the five biggest recipients of government subsidies in 2006 were: Philhealth, P3.07 billion; Land Bank of the Philippines, P1.92 billion; National Electrification Administration (NEA), P1.39 billion; National Housing Authority (NHA), P1.47 billion; and National Food Authority (NFA), P910 million.

There were 21 other state-owned firms that received subsidies from the government last year.

The five biggest recipients of state subsidy last year were the same as in 2005. Subsidies granted to Landbank, however, were used to implement the government's agrarian reform program, which the state-owned bank is tasked to oversee.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the DOF had planned to establish a scorecard system for GOCCs. Under the plan, state-owned firms will be asked to set performance targets, such as on revenue generation. Those who will meet their respective targets will be granted incentives, while those who will fall short of the goals may be subjected to reorganization.

Teves, however, admitted that the national government was unable to implement the scorecard system last year as it was preoccupied with improving its own fiscal performance. He said the DOF wanted to start the use of scorecards for state-owned firms this year.

The proposal to establish a formal system of evaluating state-owned companies was raised during the time the national government's own fiscal position was unhealthy, worsened by the subsidies granted to underperforming GOCCs.

Teves earlier said that undertaking reforms for ailment GOCCs, especially the NHA, currently the biggest loosing state-owned firm, should be urgently implemented.

One proposed measure for the NHA was to privatize one of its core functions...the trading of imported rice—and just allow it to cut costs in regulatory role.

The NHA is mandated to import rice to ease its shortages in local supply and thus prevent surges in the price of rice. The NHA likewise regulates importation by rice traders.

Explaining its losses, the NHA earlier said these were a natural consequence of its mandate to ensure steady supply and low cost of rice. To perform its mandate, the NHA is often forced to import rice and sell at a lower cost.

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Filinvest allots ₱5B for capex

Globe to spend $360M for new, existing services

By Rina T. Chikiamco

GLOBE TELECOM INC. IS SETTING ASIDE $360 million for capital expenditure this year, chief financial officer Delfin C. Gonzalez Jr. said at the company's stockholders meeting yesterday.

Delfin said about $190 million would go to infrastructure investments "in new growth areas" such as 3G and Internet services. The remaining $170 million will be spent for the expansion and improvement of the telecom's 2G network.

Globe closed 2006 with a 14-percent growth in net income to ₱13.8 billion from ₱12.1 billion in 2005.

The Ayala-owned telco also said it had posted a 6-percent growth in its consolidated service revenues to reach ₱97 billion.

"The sustained growth in service revenues together with effective cost management measures drove double digit growth in earnings, with EBITDA (earnings before taxes, depreciation and amortization) and OIBI ending the year at ₱57.2 and ₱32.1 billion, respectively. EBITDA margin remained healthy at 61 percent despite a seasonal rise in marketing spend in the last quarter," Globe said in a report said.

For 2006, the company said it had recorded a 2h percent growth in its SIM base, with significant net addition of 1.2 million in the last quarter to boost its SIM base to 13.7 million as year end. Touch Mobile continued to be a major driver of growth, marking the year with a 57-percent year-on-year growth to reach 4.9 million subscribers.

Among Globe's new offerings are the Globe Kabuhayan and Kabuklat remittance programs for overseas Filipino communities.

Globe also launched recently the Globalink IDD phone card—a re-branded IDD card that allows Filipinos in Japan to call Globe and TM subscribers at discounted rates. Following the launch of its co-branded prepaid SIMs with Singtel and Taiwan Mobile, Globe did a similar launch with CSL to provide overseas Filipinos in Hong Kong access to discounted Globe and TM call-card rates.

"We started the year with strong first quarter performance and we are pleased that we were able to maintain that positive momentum forward, bringing 2006 to a very good close," Globe president and CEO Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr. said.

Nearly ₱6B raised through listing of additional shares yesterday

By Dazlet L. Lucas

PUBLICLY LISTED FILINVEST LAND INC. plans to invest than treble its spending on new projects this year to it rises to maximize gains from the ongoing real estate boom.

In a briefing, Filinvest Land president Joseph M. Yap said the total capital expenditure for 2007 would reach ₱5 billion.

"Of this amount, ₱1.5 billion will be for residential projects, while ₱1.5 billion will be for BPO (business process outsourcing) and office projects," he said.

Last year, the firm allotted only ₱1.5 billion for capex—a relatively conservative stance compared to other developers such as Ayala Land Inc., Megaworld Properties and Robinsons Land Corp.

As the listed residential property business, up on 1.6 new projects spanning the entire range of housing types as planned for launch this year, he said.

Filinvest Land's aggressive expansion comes on the heels of yesterday's listing of additional 1.4 billion shares by the company. This exercise succeeded in raising ₱5.02 billion from a combination of foreign and local investors.

The company's share price yesterday hit ₱3.92 per share, or 13.7% percent higher than its offer price of ₱3.60 per share. Trading was heavy, with ₱1.1 billion worth of Filinvest Land shares changing hands.

Yap said the demand for housing products of the Gotianun-owned firm are being driven mainly by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) or their beneficiaries.

"Between 40 percent and 50 percent of our sales are from OFWs and their families," he said, adding that he was expecting this level of demand to persist over the foreseeable future as the country continues to export more labor.

At present, the firm has an estimated 2,200 hectares in its land bank, of which 1,800 hectares are located in the Susy Gokongwei area. The firm holds a 67% fee-tax property in Bataan pursuant to the sale of Mariwasa-Siboclin. Yap also said the firm was planning to further increase its portfolio of properties that derive revenues from such as mall and office space.

Court junks Bayantel petition

By Lelia B. Salmorin

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DISMISSED the petition of Bayan Telecommunications Inc. seeking the suspension of the required public offering in economic stocks, saying the company should have first brought the matter to the National Telecommunications Commission.

The high tribunal upheld the decision of the Derig City regional trial court in 2006 and the 2005 ruling of the Court of Appeals that the Lopez-owned Bayantel failed to state a cause of action when it filed a petition for declaratory relief against the PTC.

Republic Act 7925, the law that governs the telecommunications industry, requires telcos to make available for public subscription 30 of their aggregate common stocks within five years from the effectivity of the law or the start of the concerned company's operations, whichever comes later.

However, Bayantel sought the suspension of its public offering. It claimed that the market situation was not conducive to a successful public offering. Also, the company said that with its poor financial and that it should be exempted from the requirement. The high tribunal did not rule on whether the company was exempted from the rule.

In going to the SC, Bayantel said there was a controversy resulting in the administrative body's assumption it would have NTC sanctions if it failed to comply with RA 7925.

The telecommunications firm said it was exempted from the rule of exhaustion of administrative remedies since there was no administrative review provided by the law and that the NTC did not have the competence to decide whether the law was valid or not.

Bayantel also said applying the rule on it would bring about disastrous results for the company, and that the impossibility of compliance excused it from the required public offering.

The SOC, however, countered that the provision was clear and unambiguous, and that there was no need for judicial interpretation. The agency also said Bayantel's application of listing was limited was conditioned and made ineffective when it did not implementing guidelines governing for the implementation of the public offering requirement.

Exchange to legalize 'short selling' soon

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE (PSE) plans to allow short selling in the Philippine stock exchange (PSE) plans to allow short selling in securities borrowing and lending (SSL) program.

In a statement, the PSE said stock market investors "can now enjoy the sophistication of trading on fundamentals as well as new trading strategies, earn extra income from the new tools and inject more activity in the market."

Under the scheme, equity market investors are profit even when prices are falling by borrowing idle stock inventory, selling them, buying them back at a cheaper price, and returning the same number of shares to the original owner.

Investors can then pocket the difference in the stock price, paying a small interest charge for borrowing the idle stocks for its customers.

Local regulators insist on calling the practice SSL—although it is universally known as "short selling"—mainly because of previous negative experiences associated with it.

The last time short selling in the PSE short selling became possible after concerned government regulators approved and put in place all the rules and regulations necessary.

"The introduction of SSL addresses another the sophistication that investors have developed in capital markets abroad," PSE president and CEO Francis Lim said. "But more than that, SSL will bring additional businesses to, and increase the growth of, our stock market."

Advanced stock markets like the New York Stock Exchange as well as large Asian markets have long allowed the practice of short selling, mainly because the practice acts as a tool for facilitating overvalued share prices.

SSL introduction comes two years after the PSE consolidated efforts to introduce the product as part of a plan to expand the market's menu of products and services, the exchange said. Ernesto L. Lucas

PSALM preparing for bidding of 2 coal-fired power plants

By Abigail L. Ho

UNDERSCORED BY THE FAILURE OF THE National Transmission Corp. consortium bidding, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has lined up another big-ticket coal-fired generation facilities for auction within the year.

PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Ferdinand Zaragoza said it was planning to refold Mindanao Power Corp.'s Mindoro and Calaca power plants, both rated at 600 megawatts (MW), by the second half.

The rebidding, however, would only take place when both plants had at least 60-70 percent of their dependable capacity covered by power supply contracts, he said.

Both plants have already been auctioned off in the past, with Mindoro ever declared sold to PSN Pacific Consortium Inc.

The Calaca plant were through two failed auctions, while the asset purchase agreement between PSALM and PSN for the Mindoro plant had to be terminated after the consortium bidder failed to remit the $237-million 40-percent down payment for the plant.

PSALM failed to privatize both plants due to a common reason: The lack of power supply contracts attached to them.

Turn to page B3

Inflation . . .

From page B1

4.3 percent in January from 4.7 percent in December, housing and repairs, to 2.9 percent from 3.7 percent; fuel, light and water, to 6.7 percent from 8.4 percent; services, to 3.7 percent from 4.4 percent, and miscellaneous items, to 2.4 percent from 2.5 percent.

Inflation rate for clothing settled at 2 percent in January, registering the same pace as that in December.

"This [slowdown in inflation] will further support greater economic outlooks, help alleviate financial reforms and strengthen market confidence," Tenazas added.

Economic officials said a decelerating inflation helps increase spending, consumer spending and corporate investments, therefore boosting economic growth.

The National Economic and Development Authority earlier said inflation for the rest of 2007 is also expected to be benign given the projected slowdown in increase in global oil prices and continued strengthening of the peso.

A stronger peso helps makes imported goods cheaper, therefore tempering the increase in consumer prices.

Shares close lower

The composite index fell 9.01 points to 2,227.57 after trading between 2,200.33 and 2,300.58 points. There were 6.2 billion shares traded worth ₱3 billion.

Losers outnumbered gainers 66 to 59, while 54 stocks ended unchanged.

The broader all-share index was down 1.65 points at 2,061.18.

"The market is consolidating," said Chelsea Dipasupil of RCBC Securities. "It's healthy for correction since some stocks are already over-

From page B1

bought after the recent two ups."

Lawrence de Leon, an analyst at Secutel Capital Equities, said that after a six-day rally, investors decided to cash in on their gains.

"The correction could continue in the next few sessions, especially as investors await more corporate results," he said.

But dealers believe the market's uptrend is still intact, backed by hopes that the economy will continue expanding this year amid low interest rates and some inflation. AFP

From page B1

vice president Manolo Ayes.

Ayes added that foreign inflows continued to pour into the country the site noted that there was some room for the peso to further gain against the dollar as the local currency was still trading at a discount to the 40-45.51 quoted by offshore traders for non-deliverable forwards (contracts to buy or sell by future settlement) as of yesterday.

The banker said the peso could soon test the 49.50-49 level in the next few days.

DISCLOSURES

GLOBE Telecom Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on March 28, 2:00 p.m. at the Grand Ballroom of Intercontinental Manila in Makati City.

***

SAN MIGUEL CORP. said it was reorganizing the operations of San San Miguel Professional Dockyard and the San Miguel Shipyard Division for more effective and cost-efficient.

***

CONCENTRIX, Southeastern unit Co. has been appointed selected auditor of **Metro Alliance Inc.**

***

PIL (LEASE) Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on March 30, 9:00 a.m. at the Elite Lounge 1-A Plaza Hotel in Mandaluyong City.

***

BOSTEC Jose C. Vitug has tendered his resignation as chair of the internal integrity board of the **Philippine Stock Exchange**. **Compiled by Abigail Ho and Jaquilyn Bautista**

Cebu Pacific lowers seat prices

Airline offers P999 fare for Asia routes

By Rica T. Ochonido

CEBU PACIFIC (CEB) HAS STARTED OFFERING P999 one-way fares for most of its Asian routes.

The prices will be applicable to Manila-Singapore, Cebu-Singapore, Manila-Bangkok, Manila-Jakarta and Manila-Kuala Lumpur flights from Feb. 7 to Feb. 12, 2007.

The travel period is from Feb. 21 to May 31, 2007.

"This is the immediate payment upon booking, (and) the best way to grab the passion is via CEB's website, www.cebupacificair.com," marketing director Candice Iyog said in a statement. "It's fast and easy to book flights and get fares online."

Iyog added that the P999 fare is for one-way travel only. It is non-refundable and is inclusive of regular surcharges and government taxes.

Iyog said that the aim is meant to jumpstart the summer season.

"This is part of CEB's efforts to stimulate the market and grow the tourism industry with the lowest fares possible," she said. "It has always been CEB's mission to bring flying closer to more Filipinos."

The P999 sale is available for limited seats via the following regional services: daily flights between Manila and Singapore, six-times weekly flights between Cebu and Singapore, four-times weekly flights between Manila and Bangkok, three-weekly flights between Manila and Jakarta, and four-times weekly flights between Manila and Kuala Lumpur.

In addition to the regional sale, Cebu Pacific is gearing up for this year's summer season by opening new domestic and international routes. Cebu Pacific will launch flights between Cebu and Puerto Princesa starting July 22, as well as four-times weekly flights between Cebu and Iloilo, beginning March 7.

Next from 11 to year, Cebu Pacific has the newest fleet in the Philippines.

At present, the budget airline operates 13 brand new Airbus aircraft to its 20 domestic and seven regional destinations.

Cebu Pacific is awaiting the delivery of one more Airbus aircraft in March 2007 to complete its $676 million re-fleeting program.

PNR employees get retirement perks

AFTER YEARS OF WAITING, about 1,800 employees of Philippine National Railways will finally receive their retirement benefits.

The employees were informed by PNR general manager Jose Mo. J. Ibarreta Jr. and terminated Services Division Manager Rosalina Wilanco Garcia after they signed a memorandum of agreement covering the payment of some P800 million in PNR employee pensions that were suspended for the past 20 years.

As provided for in the agreement, P600 million was released to the GSIS last month—part of the P1 billion which the Department of Budget and Management earmarked for the retirement of the railway company's financial liabilities.

Ibarreta said that with this development, PNR now may put its finances in order.

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ROBINSONS LAND CORPORATION

Aileen Arias-Espinosa

SM Advantage Card rewards loyal members

SHE SHOPPED; SHE REWARDED HER HEADvantage Card, and won 300,000 points or P300,000 worth of shopping money from the SM Advantage Card Renewal campaign.

Elena Thompson of Makati, who has been a member of this rewards program since 2003, remembers purchasing kitchen accessories from SM Hypermarket when the cashier told her that she needed to renew her card. Luckily, "this was the time they launched their P1MM Shopping Spree Renewal Raffle Promo" and I qualified," says Elena, who is the liaison staff of the Philippine National Police.

She did not expect to be the grand prize winner, but nevertheless considers this a blessing. Elena adds, "SM rewards those who are really loyal to them. Having an SM Advantage Card is an advantage indeed.

Like Elena, members can avail themselves of exclusive privileges and perks upon presentation of the SM Advantage Card, including a free Wendy's Hamburger at SVM Fruity or Side Salad for a minimum purchase of P118. It also entitles them to great freebies and discounts at participating SM Supermall tenants, conversion of SM advantage points to P45, Mabuhay Miles, and the option to avail of a P150,000 Phil. Am accident insurance for only 20 points.

ELENA Thompson receives a P300,000 worth of shopping spree from SM Advantage Renewal Promo presented by Ang Mickey of SM Advantage

Jollibee Kids Meal blasts with Transformers collectibles until February 10

THE DELIGHTFUL TRIBES OF JOLLIBEE KIDS Meal made with the Transformers: Cybertron Robot Blasters. Get into the action with Secret Agent Optimus Prime, Megatron and Jetfire while enjoying the yummy goodness of your all-time, all-season favorites at Jollibee. The latest six collectibles come in nifty and vibrant designs loaded with its distinctive fantastic robot features that Transformers are best known for. These amazing toys can be yielded for every order of Jollibee Kids Meal of your choice, which includes the burger meal, spaghetti meal, burger steak meal and chicken joy.

So brace yourself and be amazed with the grandest comeback of the most popular robots of all time in all Jollibee outlets nationwide from Jan. 13 to Feb. 10. The Transformers enthusiast are in store for more surprises and bundays at 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 a.m. so Ask Ti for brand licensing, call 721-4311, e-mail licensing@corpinternational.com or log on to www.corpinternational.com.

Diners Club Philippines wins best franchise for 2006

IN THE 2006 DINERS CLUB INTERNAtional Asia Pacific Franchise Awards, Diners Club Philippines topped the 12 Asia Pacific franchisees as it garnered the Best Franchise Award following a strong overall performance throughout 2006. This achievement is the second for the franchisee in the last three years, the first recognized awards having been given in 2004.

This year's win can be attributed to several factors cited by the awards committee, second growth through to October 2006, a robust sales growth also through October 2006, a consistent stream of new products and features that helped enhance and revitalize the card, expanded merchant acceptance, high-quality customer service and an efficient card operations.

Atty. C. Lim, chair of SB Cards Corp. (the exclusive franchise owner of Diners Club in the Philippines), said, "We at SB Cards cannot be happier with our performance this year and we are equally glad that we are being recognized for all our efforts. With the mantra, 'global brand, local features', our winning formula is composed of two major factors: an experienced management team committed to overall growth; and an excellent execution of innovative programs coupled with high quality service. SB Cards has made it a priority to shamelessly work with our network of merchants and implement this winning formula to suit each and everyone's business needs. As a concrete example, our Diners Club customer call center has been judged as the best in the region."

Security Bank Corp. the mother company that owns SB Cards Inc. has also been such an important asset in the excellent performance of Diners Club. With its branch network acting as a major retail vendor of the credit card brand, including the fulfillment location nationwide for the redemption of bonuses and special programs made exclusive to the roster of Diners Club members.

Diners Club Asia Pacific is comprised of six Citigroup franchises (Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, Greater China, Vietnam, and Thailand) and two independent franchises (Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, Korea, Indonesia and the Philippines).

ELEVATING the 2006 Best Franchise award for SB Cards are (l-r) Rolando Ty, chair, Security Bank Corp. (left), Robert Lee, chair, SB Cards Corp. (middle right) and Alberto Villarosa, president and CEO, Security Bank Corp. (right). Presenting the award to SB Cards is Bryant Crimes, Asia Pacific head of Diners Club International (middle left).

14th PIDSP annual confab

THE PHILIPPINE INFECTIOUS DISease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP) will be hosting its 14th Annual Convention with the theme, "New Directions and Developments in Pediatric Infections" on Feb. 7 and 8 at the China Shangri-La Hotel, 1 Garden Way, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City. Registration conference are opened Feb. 6 from 1 to 6 p.m. The main topics will focus on the latest developments and innovations in the diagnosis and management of pediatric infectious diseases. Heading the list of distinguished speakers is Dr. Yoo G. Jin, a pediatric infectious disease specialist from the Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago, Illinois. For more details, call the secretariat at 374-3866; telefax 427-0986; or e-mail pidsp@yahoo.com.ph.

World-class musician finds good deal in Phinma property

INTERNATIONALLY renowned pianist Raul Sunico, praised for his "unusual gifts of lyricism and poesy in his playing, as well as great brilliance" by his orchestra mentor Sascha Gorodnitzki, has earned international recognition as a concert pianist, orchestral soloist and a composer-arranger of Philippine music.

After a career-defining solo stint overseas, with New York as the last place where he lived and performed, his talent soon awakens, hunters returned to the Philippines in 2002 to accept an invitation to head University of Santo Tomas' College of Music as its dean.

Back in his homeland, Sunico soon enough found himself investing his hard-earned savings in prime properties in Metro Manila.

Whilst maintaining the second floor house in Binondo, Quezon City, which he shares with his mother, Sunico decided to acquire two adjoining units in a posh condominium building along Roxas Boulevard, Manila. This is where he packed his collection of choice pieces of furniture he bought throughout his years of stay in New York.

"I shipped pieces of furniture I collected and bought for my apartment in New York because I love to have them here with me although it cost me a lot in shipping fees," quipped Sunico.

A collector not only of quality furniture but also of good property investments, Sunico also owns a unit at Bel-Air II gated community in the southeastern community along Mindanao Avenue, Quezon City. He said he found a diamond in the rough in Phinma Property Holdings Corp's (Phinma Properties) Spain Bernardo West Village.

In an interview, Sunico shared that he was then looking for a place to stay near a restaurant business he put up north of Quezon City. Upon learning about Spain's Bernardo West Village's proximity to his business, he immediately took interest in investing in the expansion site to the existing 11-villa condominium township. Dubbed as the "West Villas," the expansion site was just starting its groundwork and was being offered at more affordable pre-selling rates in the final basics came to inquire and see the project.

The West Villas comprises four medium-rise buildings being built on a lot adjacent to Spain Bernardo's 3.6-hectare development, adding another 319 townhouse-storey condo units to the initial 1,000 residential community's existing 937 units. Practically sold out with just a few select units left, West Villas will be ready for occupancy by the first quarter of 2008 or two years after less than five months from the start of its construction.

Phinma Properties president Willie J. Uy said in a previous interview, "With construction started in November of last year, the West Villas is only one of the projects we have in the pipeline. We are also planning to develop a Spanish-inspired community in a 1.5-hectare property in Commonwealth. A third and probably the most ambitious project is a 3.1-hectare site in Iloilo for which we soon hired a masterplanning expert with extensive experience in Singapore housing development."

Phinma Properties MP for marketing and design Ernst Ortera says that New Villas offers value-added features not commonly found in affordable housing such as modular kitchen counters, aluminum windows, tiled flooring, and painted walls and ceilings. Ortera adds that they also hired a long-term contract to ensure that the new homes will bring luck and prosperity into the lives of the buyers.

Probably the only one in its league to be able to offer units conveniently located in the Metropolis in a pre-selling price range of P500,000 to P900,000 through this big and in-house financing, Phinma Properties targets home-buyers belonging to the upper and lower-middle-class segments.

To this, Sunico says, "I have to praise Phinma Properties for coming up with such a good project which gives not just the upper-class income brackets but even the middle to lower-class have a chance to acquire a condo unit at such a nice community."

The musician-cultured-banker adds, "I can't wait to design my unit and add beautiful pieces of furniture inside."

Christine Bersola: Most-liked TV personality

RESERVISTS MEDICAL MISSION

A large group of multi-service reservists led by Col. Cesar Cabanos, INF (R), together with servicemen of the 53rd Army Reserve Division headed by Col. Virgilio Aquinaldo, in conjunction with Sta. Rosa Doctors Hospital, conducted free medical, dental, optical, circumcising, orthopedic, teething and nutritional product and food distribution and community development action in Barangay Las Piñas, Lucena, Batangas last week. Over 1,000 patients and recipients were benefited. Shown in photo are volunteering reservists in a field assisted by Mayor Rosa Ilagan, (3rd r), and Brgy. Kagawad Rosy Pagalan, (4th r).

Asian legal website launched Jan. 10

TWO Internet-looking for laws and court decisions of Asia-Pacific countries were launched to ease difficulties making searches as all pertinent legal information are now contained in a single website. On Jan. 10, the Asian Legal Information Institute or AsianLII website (www.asianlii.org) was launched in the Philippines with no less than Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynaldo S. Puno and Australian Ambassador Tony Hely as guests of honor.

AsianLII is a non-profit and free access website for legal information from all 27 countries and territories in Asia. It already provides access to 163 databases drawn from almost all 27 Asian countries, which includes over 140,000 cases and more than 35,000 pieces of legislation.

The legal information institute aims to facilitate and promote cooperative research, make laws of Asia-Pacific countries more easily accessible, encourage international trade and investment, and promote the judicial and other functions of law.

AsianLII was first launched for free public access Dec. 8, 2006 in Sydney with launches in a multitude of Asian countries taking place in 2007, beginning with the Philippines. It provides searching and browsing databases of legislation, case law, law reform reports, law journals and other legal information, where available, from each country in the region.

Cornell University and Australian Law Foundation (ALF) representatives the Philippines in AsianLII as they operate the LawPhil Project (www.lawphil.net), which is one of the most complete and well-organized databases of Philippine laws, jurisprudence and other legal materials. It is the legal website project of the ALF, a non-stock, non-profit institution specializing in legal education which manages Australia Innovative Solutions.

AsianLII is being developed by the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII), a joint facility of the Law Faculties at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW). It cooperates with partner institutions in Asian countries and other legal information institutes belonging to the Free Access to Law Movement.

R.P. CAR OF THE YEAR

Automotive scribes' votes nearing conclusion

By Tessa R. Salazar

YOU SERIOUSLY NEED reasoning scribes guide to choosing a vehicle, especially if:

- You think you're too good about cars and you won't trust anyone else.
- You think the car you're eyeing is too good as for unmanned to other cars.
- You think you did your homework researching on the car you like.
- You've already hopped from one car manufacturer to another and did some test test drives, and still couldn't make up your mind.
- You've stalled the like till you're the guru's carnations.
- You've read numerous car drive reviews and still can't get the point.
- You're not satisfied with other personal car considerations.

Well, how about the ultimate motoring journalists' guide, the Car of the Year? It certainly wouldn't hurt your purchasing decision learning to reach more from a comprehensive roadtest in the country with former rally drivers and racers conducting the tests. The Applied Culinary and Sales Operations Group headed the quantitative evaluation that includes acceleration, braking distance test conducted by the GTech Pro Meter as supplied by Speed Lab and tests recorded for rallying purposes.

Among the qualitative evaluation tested were steering, ride comfort, exterior theme, build quality and other qualitative factors.

23 vehicles tested

The Car Awards Group Inc. (Cagi), the organizer of the country's Car of the Year (Coty), has tested a total of 23 vehicles since November last year. Invitees will conclude on Feb. 11 with Perrin Luxury MPV, Audi Q7 3.0 TDI (ultra luxury SUV entry), Pending entries are Jeep Commander (city off-road/V entry) and Chrysler Pacifica (luxury MPV entry), which are pending release from Customs in Pasc Manila.

On Feb. 4, award seers entry-level and luxury multipurpose vehicles and pickups, showing those were the Ford Ranger 4x (previous Coty winner), which used sports a three-liter turbo diesel equipped with Common Rail Direct Injection Diesel (CRDI) and the Mitsubishi Strada pickup, which has a new 2.5-liter turbo diesel engine, also with common-rail technology.

For the entry-level MPV segment, last year's winner, the Toyota Innova, competes with Toyota Avanza 1.3-liter VVT-I engine.

Also vieed was the luxury MPV segment entry, the seven-seater Mitsubishi's Grandis 2.4-liter engine, but year's category winner.

No smooch sailing

The Car Awards Group Inc.'s owners neither hasn't encountered smooth sailing, though. Cagi president Aida Sevilla Mendoza said some test units were sold out or had no new units available for testing.

Test-tested were Subaru Impreza WRX, Audi A3 3.2 Quattro, BMW 5 series (a category winner and this year's contender) and Volvo XC 70 cross country Turbo (also a winner and one of this year's contenders).

Car of the Year is now on its 3rd edition, and is organized by Cagi, a non-stock, nonprofit organization made up of writers for various motoring business and lifestyle publications and broadcast media. The Car of the Year award is Cagi's flagship project.

Companies that believe in this endeavor and have supported the event are Automobile Association Philippines, Manila International Auto Show (organized by Worldbex Services International), Sarah Lucas Tollaroy, Bridgestone tires, FedEx, Petron Corp., Sony Ericsson, Standard Insurance, San Miguel Corp., Redwood Land, and Kenzi Hills Golf and Country Club in Antipolo.

Kenzi Hills provided the test venue by closing off several roads of the sprawling exclusive subdivision for the Coty testers.

To ensure that Cagi's decision is not tampered-in biased, no manufacturers are ever allowed to sponsor Cagi awards and nominate for obvious reasons.

Audi TT Coupé, one for the 'little black book'

JUST TWO DAYS IN AUDI'S SPORTY sporting coupé and I'm short for words. In fact, it has taken me some time to find the share for this week's installment. Like an intimate dinner with a very interesting and attractive female companion, one just wants to remember all the little moments and jot them down somewhere. Consider this then as the "little black book" entry of my all too short time with the Audi TT Coupé.

My first few minutes with the low slung, two-door beauty was spent peering the shapes and shadows of the sandwich. I've seen pictures and displays but there's nothing like seeing it for real. The TT Coupé is definitely one that this coupé exudes. The previous iteration of the TT Coupé was already a strong design statement with its bulbous and rounded lines, including the obvious theme for design. So when words like shoulder (the massive and ell) hinting aptly at the appearance that lies in the driver's seat.

The cockpit and interior are equally what one would find in a purpose-built machine. There is quality and a single overall theme of sporting luxury, nothing to distract the driver from the obvious task at hand. Seating position is excellent and all the controls are installed with the driver in mind. Propped in the leather, aluminum and the high-gloss polycarbonate of the cockpit, I very much doubt that any of the Tall wolf's finest has had it any better.

What will sell this car

The first hour behind the wheel is what will sell this car. Again, intense and more nimble cars are available in the market but only a handful delivers an experience as well sorted as the Audi TT Coupé. At the core of this fun, petite driving package are three systems that help understate the car's overall upbeat and poise-raising nature.

The 2.0-liter FSI turbo power plant is the heart of the Audi TT Coupé. Whole 200 bhp is really nothing to write home about, the 280 Nm of torque of this engine is more than adequate for most driving situations. Also available from about 2,000 all the way to 5,000 rpm. In real terms this means that once the turbo spools, its 4 horses and making journeys for the most part. Audi has also mixed the sound experience of the TT Coupé producing a baritone buzz while on the throttle with the brake making a "whoomph" sound on the up-shifts.

The six-speed, twin-clutch sequential gearbox is also a must for the TT Coupé. Dubbed S-tronic by Audi, all this really means that one gets a true manual gearbox without the clutch pedal. A computer makes the next possible gear that the driver can shift to and with the aid of a second clutch assembly, makes the transition from cog to cog as seamless as a well-executed clutch pedal.

Better chassis balance

With handling in mind, Audi has gone with a non-essential body frame for the TT Coupé. Of the 266 kg of the vehicle's body shell, almost 70 percent is made from aluminum with the steel exercise used mainly in the rear for better chassis balance. This translates directly into a stiff, responsive sporty temperament that completes the character of the Audi TT Coupé.

In Full dynamic steering, according to and out of traffic, the car responds with that its rear is quite lively, even for a front-wheel-driver car. This is good because when the road gets tangled and curvy the same animated rear end can be put to good use with a little flip or fifty of the throttle without the car being tail happy or too prone to understeer. Balance is what this car is about.

Models that I'll get another date with the Audi TT Coupé, especially one that has allowed such a richer (thorough evaluation of the car. Already in Feb for a second chance to get to know his better, the schedule for the demonstrators seems booked. Fine by me, time to savor on, I guess. But if the she calls back, what can I do?

AUDI TT Coupé, wouldn't you hope for a second date?

Car insurance woes: the conclusion

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

THE COLUMN LAST MONTH ON MY unexpected experiences with Mapfre Insular insurance broker Ann Philippines elicited a number of reactions from readers.

Some e-mailed helpful information and advice about the car insurance business, two asserted that they also had problems dealing with Mapfre, one or two recommended transferring to a more reliable insurance firm while still another offered his company's services as an insurance broker.

Phil Cebbie, the managing director of Ann Asia and Alexander Bryan, Mapfre's first vice president for motor, marine and casualty underwriting e-mailed their apologies and their promises to change their procedures so as to avoid the occurrence of delays in processing claims in the future.

90 days

The other readers stressed that insurance agencies are usually given 90 days by insurance companies to remit premium payments (when policies insured). They contended that not to failure to remit my payment to Mapfre before the traffic accident happened, delayed Mapfre's processing of my claim.

However, Rogie Bendelo, administrative officer of Tokio Marine Malayan Insurance Co.'s Cebu Service Office, asserted that while it is the insurer's policy to settle claims only upon receipt of payment of the premium, Mapfre should have settled my claim immediately.

A problem

Further, the insurer should not tell the claimant that there is a problem with his/her claim since the broker hasn't remitted the premium. This will place the claimant in an embarrassing light. The insurer's staff should handle the matter in a way that will not offend the claimant since, in the first place, the claimant has nothing to do whatsoever with any agreement between the broker and the insurer.

Another reader, Hoover Uy de Baron, president of Baron Group Insurance Brokers, critiqued that, "First of all, you should not have needed to wait for an accident inspector and a claim report. All that is actually required is an affidavit. In fact, your broker should be the one to follow up and file all the documents for you and the person that you got into an accident with. All you really should have done is run phone calls to your insurance broker."

Advisable

A similar comment came from Dennis Tay, who wrote that she has been working in the roadlife insurance business for the past four years. "In my opinion, it is advisable to have an insurance agent. Why? Because as you experienced, you had difficulty in getting your letter of authority issued within three to five days as provided. Through the help of an agent or even your insurance agency, you could have had the process expedited since they already have contacts in your insurance company."

Both Ms Tay and Ms. Bendelo suggested that when I renewed my policy, I should get a Private Vehicle (PV) policy. I was unaware previously that under the Commercial Vehicle (CV) policy that I have at present, the deductible is on a percent of the sum insured or P2,000, whichever is higher. Thus my chagrin when I discovered that my deductible is P10,099.38. Under a PV policy, the deductible is only 0.50 percent of the sum insured or P2,000, whichever is higher.

Lower premium

Ms. Bendelo pointed out that since the CV policy has a lower premium compared to the PV policy some insurance companies (most CV policies to private car owners who do not want to pay a high premium. However, in case of collision or non damage, the insured will have to shell out a very high deductible...which is exactly what happened to me. So theoretically if I or my driver have more than one accident during the year covered by my CV policy, I will end up paying the CV policy's high deductible more than once. Which makes me glad that I don't have a driver.

All this hassle about collecting a claim reminds me of what happened many moons years ago, when my father was still alive, and working at the premiere of a life insurance company. My car collided with a speeding taxicab at an intersection in Quezon City, but this insurance company with which my car was insured refused to release the letter of authority (LOA) for the repair. I had to phone my dad who then phoned the insurance Commissioner who in turn phoned the president of the insurance company. The LOA was released the very next day.

Which, as usual, the insurance company had to have the last laugh. They informed me that they would not renew my policy. As if I wanted to?

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Sarcasm is just one more exercise an office.

MOTORING

With latest concept car, Jaguar takes new direction

By Charlie E. Bobier

IF YOU'RE GIVEN TO thinking that Jaguars are all about retro and conservative styling, then think again.

Jaguar Cars Inc., the country's exclusive distributor of the premium car brand, recently released images of the C-XF, the Jaguar concept car that made its public debut last month during the 2007 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Michigan.

As the name implies, the C-XF is a concept variant of XF sedan that Jaguar will launch next year to replace the current S-Type sedan in most markets.

That unlike most concept versions, this one will be very close to the production model in terms of profile, external and internal features. While the C-XF is powered by a 400 horsepower 4.2-liter V8 engine, the production model will be offered with a wide range of engines. Indeed, it's hence while since Jaguar has taken a fresh design direction and this will definitely signal the arrival of a new era for the car brand," said JCI president Wellington Leong.

Same design team

The C-XF was designed by the same team that produced Jaguar's award-winning XF sports GT range in 2005. Ian Callum, Jaguar's director of design and Julian Thomson, head of advanced design.

From the images released, the C-XF sports slit-like headlights, huge grille (that is recessed deeply into the body from, looking more like a jet's air intake), aggressive and muscular body panelling, distinctive front wraparound wheel arches and bespoke Pirelli tires wrapping 21-inch machined, polished aluminum wheels.

In addition, the C-XF also features a new Jaguar badge that is fitted to the grille, not on the hood as we are now familiar with.

New technologies

Just like what is found in the C-XF, the upcoming production version will embrace new technologies that will surely enhance driver experience," Leong promised.

The C-XF features a new technology called Jaguar Sense, a synergic technology that employs motion-detecting sensors—sensors to the variety of a hand—to activate certain functions in the cockpit to be activated instead of the usual pushing/pressing.

The C-XF also has a powerful "power" feature that pulses like a heartbeat on the center console and once pushed, aluminum rings leaves from the center console to reveal the gear shift knob.

As the engine starts, a blue light sweeps around the cabin, and in the center overhead illuminating with a muted blue light and a final blue light shines from the front grille, signaling the car is ready to go.

Indeed, Leong said all these features are prime examples of how Jaguar has adapted to changing consumers' tastes and hopes that the forthcoming XF will truly make the Jaguar brand among the most sought after in the premium car market.

WITH its sleek and modern lines the C-XF departs from Jaguar's conservative and classical design concept.

LIGHTWEIGHT, sculpted leather-style seats and a futuristic cockpit fills the C-XF interior.

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Chuie Bansil-Perrone
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

Prom princesses

2bU! helps Jamila Anne Lecsasla and Djam Mansilla score the perfect gown for their big days

WITH Her hairstylists and makeup artist Myra Feng

DJAM before the makeover

Text by Bianca Consunji
Photos by Tatong Dizon
24/7 Correspondents

JUST ABOUT EVERY GIRL dreams of the perfect prom: a dashing date, beautiful hair and makeup, and a picture-perfect gown.

However, the prom, aside from living up to unrealistic expectations (not everyone can be prom queen, after all), is expensive. Female prom-goers have to ask for money from their parents not only to pay for overpriced dinners for their boorish dates, but for the gown and makeup session at the salon as well.

With this in mind, Jamilla Anne Lecsasla and Brenella Justine Alfiguis Mansilla (Djam for short) asked 24/7 help to score the perfect gown for their big days. Jamilla, who went to 24/7 last Christmas, already had a lineup for her gown, hair and makeup. However, some last-minute changes had to be made, and a new team was brought in to help her transform into prom queen material.

Djam, on the other hand, got a prom makeover with the help of her mom, Liberty Mansilla. Ms Mansilla initially just requested help to find a shop that stored out prom gowns, but 24/7 asked the help of several people from the fashion and beauty industries to make her daughter's makeover complete.

For the two girls, Mirabelle Juanzo of Cinderella Clothing Corporation had two dress styles from the Seventeen Prom Collection made in their sizes. Jamilla, whose gown had a country theme, got a regal apple-green strapless gown. Djam got a bright fuchsia long mermaid dress for her masquerade party, which she embellished with a glittery mask and rhinestone accessories.

Lanie Aurelio, associate makeup artist for makeup brand Bench & Co. (which will be serving its Manila users), did Jamilla's makeup. For Jamilla's eyes, she used lime-green shadow and paired it with nude gloss. Nora Hasan of Capelli Salon Café soaked the top portion of her hair and set it with curls. A rhinestone tiara completed the royalty illusion.

"I was stunned at how beautiful my makeup looked," Jamilla said after. "Ms Lanie used false lashes on me, and it created a really dramatic look on my eyes. Plus the dress fit really well."

For Djam, Myra Feng did a natural, glowing look. She used light pink colors and shimmer to complement the fuchsia gown. Jojo Diaz, also of Capelli Salon Café, decided to go with a bouffant hairdo to bring out her naturally curly hair.

Jamilla said, "I felt like a model and a princess at the same time. I didn't end up prom princess, but the experience I had was worth more than the princess crown. Imagine, I had a photographer clicking away while I was being made up! The experience I had was something that others could only dream of, but it came true for me. The night was simply wonderful."

PHOTO C3

BEAUTY for the prom

THE MODEL'S hair was long and curly, so Goudven gave her a new style that's easier to manage.

TEXTURE plus bangs — that's the recipe for hair in 2007.

A *hairy* forecast

For 2007, the key words are versatility and low maintenance. Bangs are big and curls are out.

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Ryan Lim

LAST YEAR WAS ALL ABOUT curls, Goudven Le Floch, French consultant and hair stylist for Franck Provost and Fabio Salsa, attributes it to the Korean wave that has hit the country.

"We had so many people coming in asking for curls because of what they've seen on Korean soaps."

But 2007, he says, is the year to bid curls bye bye. "No more curls, curls are done."

Instead, hair this year will be about "versatility"—for both women and stylists.

"You go with the hair nature of the client. **There's no real shape, it can be molded.** It has to be versatile in a way that if she doesn't want to blow-dry it, it will still look good. It should also allow you to get different styles each time," says Goudven, who has been with the salon for five years.

"Versatility is important for busy people, he says. "A huge number of our clients would say, 'I don't blow-dry my hair because I'm busy' or because they don't know how. They want something they don't have to fix."

GOUDVEN Le Floch's hard at work

This year, high-maintenance hair is out. "Women have to be able to fix their hair in 10 minutes," says Goudven.

2007 is also the year for bangs. "Bangs have been big the past two or three months. I call it the veiled bangs."

Veiled bangs are versatile as well. "If you aware hair falling, you can have that. But if you want it veiled, you can have it as well."

Men have also been inspired by European hair wear. "For the past two years, they've been keeping their hair a little longer. This year, men will go for a cleaner look. Shorter, but denser still at the sides and a lot of texture on top! It's more something to work with."

Again, versatility is the key word. "They can get it for the office and get funky on weekends."

Natural effect

Even for hair color, the operative word is low maintenance. "This year we're going for a more natural effect. And you only have to do it every two months."

Goudven also stresses the importance of taking care of your hair with the right products. He recommends using a good shampoo like Kerastase Bain de Force 1 or 2 for people with normal or dry hair, while people who have gone through a lot of chemical treatments can try Kerastase Bain De Force Intensive conditioning will help maintain beautiful hair, too.

"Once a week, use a deep treatment which is different from any conditioner," he suggests.

Goudven has timeless hair tips for both men and women. Men should be wary of overgelling, he says.

"They should try experimenting with other products," he adds. "Sid is so stiff. They **should try wax. Men don't like wax because** it's shiny but now they can get wax that **doesn't shine at all.**"

Women shouldn't try so hard, he says. "They want curls, they want straight hair. Don't fight your hair. Just find your style and go with it."

Now doesn't that sound so liberating?

French Provost is at 330 Jupiter St. Bel-Air Village, Makati, 756. 8913409. to 025, with branches in San Antonio Village, Mandaluyong City 756. 7721209 to 863. Alfio Salsa is in Power Plant Mall and soon will have another branch at Corinthian Gardens, QC.

E-mail the author at pastor@inquirer.com.ph.

Here are several young-looking spring/summer collections that would be great for wearing to the prom

LANCÔME Pop Chorale

SHISEIDO Nakano collection

Makeup *magic*

Text by Bianca Caruncji
BMC@inquirer.com

MAC Dazzle

CAN'T DECIDE what makeup look you want to achieve for your prom?

You'll have to take several factors into consideration: your personality, prom dress, venue and of course, budget. If you have sentimental prom to spare, dare by all means, go ahead and book that makeup artist you've been reading about in the magazines. Make sure to book the salon and makeup artist early, as proms are held on almost a weekly basis from now until the end of March.

Others go for the more practical route and opt to have their makeup done at cosmetic counters in malls. This isn't a bad idea, especially if the brand has established makeup artists (brands like Mac Cosmetics and MAC have resident artists who can do high quality makeup at the counters).

While it's not necessary to purchase an item from the store—especially if you're on a budget—you might want to remember the shades that the artists use to bring out your best features. But if you're having it done with our having anything, call the store beforehand and inform the artist at once on he or she won't waste time researching ways on how to do the items. This is also a chance you can check if it has time limit (perfect if you want to do your makeup).

However, if you have the cash to spare, there are an item or two from the brand. Many makeup brands are currently offering limited-edition products, perfect for occasions, which often carry the youngest and freshest-looking items of all the makeup collections in a year.

The advantage of purchasing an item used on you is that you can always get a second! Love that evening for a touch-up. Our best pick? Multipurpose products that can be used on the lips, cheeks, and sometimes eyes.

Because 2007 revolved around the several young-looking spring/summer collections that would be great for wearing to the prom, here are our favorites:

For the avant-garde diva: Shu Uemura Paradox—This is definitely not for wallflowers. The Shu Uemura Paradox collection combines mercurial shimmers with luminous colors. The color palette includes several shades of purple, white, yellow and blue, but these are not presented in the traditional feminine manner. If you love looking out for fashion forecasts and are bored with the usual girly collections, Paradox has just what you need.

Check out the Pitcher Eye Shadow in lil Yellow ($30), a bright matte yellow that's sure to catch attention; Vision Spriers Blush, a candied peach shade; Rouge Unlimited lipstick in PK 326 (Orchid), and the MC White Drawing Pencil, which can be used to highlight the eyes.

However, the best part of the collection has to be the false lashes. You can opt for the full Mystical lashes (black crowned with gold beads) which cost $30. Or the Dramatic Lashes (individual black, gold and white lashes). Incidentally, the white versions of the lashes are luminous, so be prepared for some attention when the lights dim. Also check out the new 3DH brush, a 3-for-1 Duffy brush that you can use along to your liag with an invisible as all.

For the girly-girl: MAC Emote—Inspired by graceful ballerinas, the MAC Emote collection contains all sorts of pastel shades in the form of eye shadow, lip gloss, lipstick, loose color pigment, and the star of the show, the Shimmerblur Eyeshadow ($800) duos.

This collection reminds one of an impressionistic painting; airy, full of light and texture, and all-out romantic. If your prom guest is all about layers of tulle, silk, and floral appliqué, this is the collection for you.

Our favorite in the collection is the Lightescapade ($800) which can be used as a highlighter and eye shadow (It looks like Nicolle Pop Cosmetics in the past because of its yellow, pink, blue, and orange swirls). But also like the sea green Pastelude pigment, frosted pink Fe Fetiche lip gloss, and blue of Spring eye shadows, a basic cream shade that you're used for any occasion.

For the animal lover: Kenneth Iso Takahiro—Packaging wise, this is the best spring/summer collection of all the brands I mentioned here. The concept of Takahiro set, which means "somethings" in Japanese, was reversed by designer Simone Legno, who collaborated with Sanaklaben for the collection. The collection contains eye shadows quads, lip glosses, high lighter and several kinds of blush, all decorated with Japanese-inspired pop art.

High-school girls will love the Soft Lights and Touch Set in Boleo Mix, which includes a large pot of pale pink blush and a compact brush made of goat hair.

Also worth checking out are the Mini Thin Line gel-liner multipurpose cream that can be used for the lips and cheeks) and the eye shadow quads Jet Shadella, a brown-and-peach based family, and Celebrina, which has pink and silver hues), for lip gloss Dramatique, a bright pink shade, can go with everyone and matte shiseiddo lipstick in Rose Pink Matte Lipstick if you're wearing something trendy (like a bold shirt paired with a skirt) to your prom.

For the Manic Antoinette wannabe: Lancôme Pop Chorale—According to Zarlene Chan, product manager of Lancôme, the Pop Chorale collection is a blend of modern and traditional elements.

"It's an offbeat vision of the 18th century," she said. "Think Marie Antoinette sitting in her boudoir while listening to electronic music on her iPod. The shades are reminiscent of sweet ice cream with strawberry pinnettes, almond and chocolate."

The collection contains two eye shadow palettes, Sweet Cupcake (pink glitter), Sweet Tea candy pink gloss), three shades of Color Fever lipstick, and silver glitter eye liner. Get this if the Manic Antoinette movie was the inspiration for your prom gown.

For the classic cool: Ayuko Mirror Reflects—Japanese brand Ayuko takes its cue from a kaleidoscope, with its collage of overlapping lines and textures. However, the collection closer every from being too flashy by making even its brightest colors wearable for even the mellow personalities.

This is perfect for girls whose dresses are inspired by vintage Hollywood gowns (think mellow blockbuster and Gloria Gaffin). The collection's overall feel is classic, sophisticated and subtle.

The Mirror Reflects collection contains three eye shadow quads in Oriental Fuchsia (yellow, pale pink, bright pink, and brown), Shimmer Gold Topaz (gold, dark brown, and two shades of beige), and three gloss liner (silver, sky blue, ocean blue, and midnight blue). It also has two shades of liquid eye liner in Blue Heaven and Golden Brown, and two shades of lip lacquer (Mercedes Peach and Ell Brown).

JOYCE before the makeover

READY for her closeup

Prom *princesses*

Prom princesses page 43

"It was my first time to have my hair and face done," Ojem said. "I was really happy about the outcome. My friends and I had a good time during the prom. I didn't win any prize, but the chance to get a pretty makeover and a dress is already the grand prize."

E-mail the author at bianca.caruncji@yahoo.com

JOYCE in a gown made for her by Cinderella

WITH makeup artist Loren and hairstylist Mars

SELF-ESTEEM CHRONICLES

'Wala na bang mas maganda?'

By Kara Mendoza

GROWING UP, I WAS CALLED "Mare!" by a lot of people not just because she was popular during those times but also because I resembled her very much.

When we were only ten and eleven-years-old, I thought I was adorable. However, there are things you want to change physically even if you're really young, and at the top of my list then were my wide forehead and huge nose.

How huge is huge? In Filipino that is served of tall coconut leaves would fit inside my nose (I know this because I tried it when I was 12). Well, yeah, you can laugh now. But it's true.

There was also an event that happened when I was 8 years old that triggered more insecurities. Several grade-one-the-time-of-our Recognition session, and the teacher was choosing girls to act as angels. All the while had been blind, so I really didn't care much if I wasn't in it. But a classmate of mine became ill and was not sure if she could make it to the occasion. To fill the spot, the adviser chose me to be her proxy. So I was dragged to another classroom and I was presented to my unseen teacher, the head of the event. She stared at me, looked at my adviser, and uttered the words I would never ever forget. "Wala na bang mas maganda?"

The teacher stared at me, looked at my adviser, and uttered the words I would never ever forget.

I was young, but I know what she meant. (I don't know what I remember this. I had low self-esteem since and I remember the pain very vividly.) My worry for myself. Sorry that I wasn't pretty enough for her and perhaps for other people.

I didn't know how exactly to deal with the situation, but I remember burying myself in schoolwork for declamation contests and theater presentations. Worse, I ended up playing the disgusting and ugly girl so as to cover all the bases. People commended my talent and remarked at how natural I played the part, but what they didn't know was that my tears were triggered by all the pain I'd kept inside because of my insecurities.

Upon my realization helped me somehow because I became the champion in all the declamation contests in school, and the teachers loved to get me to act the special productions. I found solace and the feeling of how liberating it could get whenever I shared my pain to people who would listen. Sometime saving because my therapy.

In sixth grade, I grew taller (taller than the boys), developed buck acne, and became getting chubby. So I had to accept that I could never be up on stage for the beauty pageants in school. I grew up trying to accept rejection from boys that I liked. And I grew up to hate being what your beauty was.

Having high self-esteem is important in our daily lives. Well, there is a reason to become one of the contestants for inner-school speech competitions. I thought it was my time as I was. Unfortunately I lost and didn't get the part, no other rejection, but this time I didn't know how to handle it. I thought it was my doing. I was good at, my only talent, had now been taken away. I sank into depression for many weeks.

It's a relief we had, I received a letter from my mom that changed my perspective drastically. Mom said she was sure her son, myself inside my room and was still so anybody after the said contest. And that's she said, "In life there are many ups and downs. So long you to rise up or many pagkatapos. But I'm always here. You're still No. 1 for me and I'm very proud of you and all of your achievements."

I still go every now and whenever I read this letter. I know that somebody loved me and would accept me through and through.

Time passed by quickly and with the new confidence I had, I discovered I could do more things. I didn't know I could sing, be creative and paint a little, now I'm doing photographs and capturing the beauty in people, whatever form who they might have.

I overcame the acne problem. I stopped growing when I reached 5'5", and now I have a boyfriend who has a loving heart who reminds me I'm beautiful inside and out. Yes, my mom is still very supportive of everything I do. I just keep expressing her precious words to me whenever I'm in my lowest to remind myself that someone is proud of whoever and whatever I have become.

The Self-Esteem Chronicles of Dove is published in partnership with Dove. Dove broadens the standards of beauty and inspires self-esteem in order to inspire many women to care for themselves. Below is a contribution to the Dove Self-Esteem Fund by purchasing Dove products. Proceeds from the fund are used to run Body Talk, a self-esteem workshop to help young girls develop a positive self-image.

Be a part of 2b4U and Dove's Self-Esteem Chronicles

DOVE RECENTLY LAUNCHED THE SELF-Esteem fund, which will be used to run Body Talk Workshops for young girls. This time, we want to reach out and share their stories.

Share your story. Use the following questions as guide.

Tell us about your childhood beauty issue: Why do you feel you need to improve your ability to make your goals and maximize your potential? How did you give yourself help (for example, your hang-ups)? Do you have tips for building a positive self-image?

Don't worry about writing skills. The Self-Esteem Chronicles for the last eight weeks, until March 14. You don't write the most well-work. Deadline of stories is every Wednesday. Essays must be a maximum of 4,000 characters.

If your story is selected, it will be published in 2b4U (and you will receive Dove gift packs and a limited edition Dove Bodywash Tin Designed by Mark Tuazon).

Don't forget to choose which shirt color reveals you most: "If dark t-shirt was brighter your day", "Activities for any Everyday", "A short-sleeved sweatshirt", "100%—no! Never ty", sometimes you are well read: "I'm petite and a big dreamer" (hint: 15-25 inches); "I'm somewhere in between, but just as normal" (26-32 inches); "I'm big and beautiful" (33-48 inches).

E-mail your entries to 2b4U@dove.com.ph/2b4U@yahoo.com.ph or mail to: 2b4U, 2nd Floor, Philippine Star Building, Railroad cor. Industry Sts., Port Area, Manila.

Dream girl

FORMER "AMERICAN IDOL" contestant Jennifer Hudson makes an Oscar-nominated acting debut with an already acclaimed performance in "Dreamgirls."

The film adaptation of the Tony award-winning 1981 musical follows the rise and fall of a fictitious sequin-girl singing group in the '60s. Despite Beyoncé Knowles carrying as the Diana Ross-counterpart, the play and film is really about Hudson's character, Effie White, the "heavier" singer who looks less glamorous but is the one girl of the group with real talent.

Hudson talks about the film, her career and life after "American Idol."

Annie Potts has said that while supervising, where Simon criticized you so harshly in front of America, prepared you for this.

Definitely. I give that experience credit, and I feel everything prepares you for the next. It helped make Effie and my stories parallel. I definitely see similarities in it.

You know you could sing. But did you know you could be the emotional anchor of a film?

I did not know that! I was learning it as I went along. I didn't even realize that was what I was doing. I just felt like I needed to be there water for Florence Ballard, who Effie is based on. That was part of my motivation.

You said that when you watched old clips of the Supremes, you would see how Florence would be aloof from the others...

Yeah. I mean, just her disposition, and the way she would separate herself from the rest of The Supremes. The look on her face of not being happy with being there ... Just knowing from the research and the background... you can only imagine what she was feeling.

I felt like that's what "And I Am Telling You" is about, and what Effie screaming out is about. It's how her fans felt she should have treated, because if you go look at a picture or even a clip of one of their performances, you would say: "What's wrong with her?" without knowing the story. And that, I think, is Effie screaming out.

"And I Am Telling You" **in the film is an** incredibly powerful moment. When you're doing a show, you'll sing a song like that once a night on stage. When you're making a movie, you're probably singing that song again and again all day. What kind of emotional place do you get to?

You get to a desperate emotional place! I actually ended up doing "And I Am Telling You," "I'm Changing" and "One Night Only" all in one week.

Like I say it was a lot of everything... and of course "And I Am Telling You" is all hit by emotion. And that's what I sing by— it's what I'm trained to sing by. I need no endowment to and know what I'm saying and know what I'm trying to get across, and I just found the emotion for that.

Annie also said that you're sensitive. He said you're also scrawny and that you had to get to a place where you could be a little bit of a diva.

Bill said I was just a little too sweet and soft-spoken, and wanted me to be more aggressive. They wanted me to be more demanding, like Effie ... so take charge and be that—how they do it. I had to go through Diva 101, without me having that attitude, walking in when I felt like it, walking out when I felt like it, saying what I wanted to say. Stuff like that.

You went from a size 20/22 to a 10/12 for the part?

Jennifer's a very healthy eater. I only eat chicken, fish and turkey, no fried foods. I don't even drink soda. But for Effie I had to change it a little bit and eat cookies and cakes and pies so all were hours of the night, and I got teased with it, because I had to gain and maintain the weight. I found the biggest challenge, more than gaining or losing weight, was to maintain the weight. Anytime I lost an inch, [wardrobe] was like, 'Nope, you gotta go back up.' It was hard because of all the shootings, play and the busy schedule.

Whose decision was it on how big Effie should be?

We just needed to be able to paralyze the difference between Effie's image and and the other girls' image. I don't think it was so much about 'Effie needs to be a size 16/18 and 200 pounds'—it was just so you could show the difference.

Was one of the biggest sacrifices for you in this film wearing the outfit in the "Heavy" number?

Yes! That outfit was the worst thing in my life. Oh my God, I don't know what they were thinking! It felt like I was in a box, and then I had these fishnets on—and when your legs are thick and rub together, fishnets don't feel so good!

Then I had these shoes that were custom-made. Don't ever get no shoes that are custom-made to fit your feet! Honey, it took at least four people to put the shoes on my feet. That's how uncomfortable it is... my feet still don't look right. That was the most painful, and that was our longest night of shooting.

What was your favorite time period and look for Effie?

I like Effie when she went through her trying times, because it was really real. Of course, we love the glamour and the glitz, but I loved the realness, getting stripped down to the bones of the law. That was one of my favorites.

Was this role a tribute to any of the big-voiced women who came before you, like Aretha Franklin?

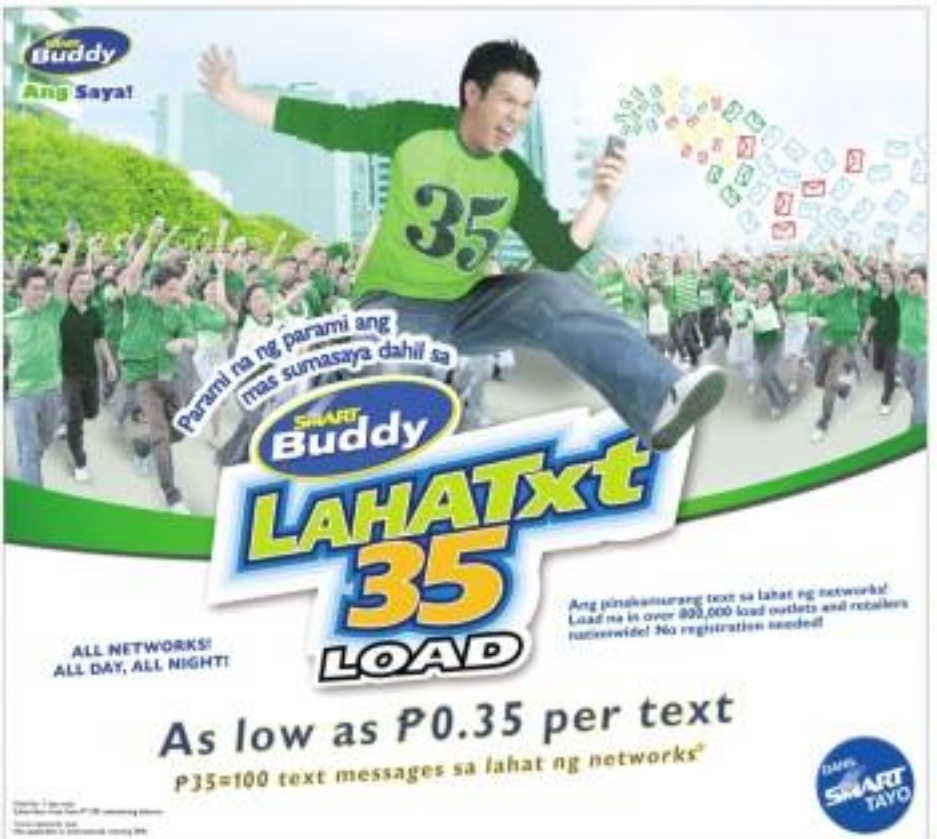
In researching Effie, the first thing that came to mind was Aretha Franklin. I feel like the idea for that voice came from Aretha, and when Jennifer Holliday got a hold of it she took it to a whole other place. But I patterned and dedicated each songs in my favorite female artists. "Move," if you listen to it, is Aretha style, has an Aretha feel. I used some of the licks she would throw into a song. "I'm Changing," it's Jennifer Holliday. And "One Night Only"—is my dedication to Whitney.

Is it modern for you next, or is it stage?

Next for me is recording my album, and then after that I want to do more movies. Later down the line I would love to do theater.

JENNIFER Hudson has been raking in awards for her role as Effie White in "Dreamgirls." Will she win an Oscar as well?

'American Idol' loser is a winner in most Oscar-nominated film this year



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2007 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Asian girl power

By Nina Mark M. Eaton
24/7 Correspondent

The Asian version of the 'Amazing Race' yields a first—the first all-female team winner in the history of the reality TV franchise

IF THERE IS ONE THING WE can all learn from Malaysians Zabrina Fernandez, 24, and Joe Jer Tee, 29, it is that it pays to know what you're getting yourself into.

When the self-professed reality TV buffs joined "The Amazing Race Asia," they really, really knew what they were getting themselves into. Not only are they hardcore fans of the reality TV genre, they are painstakingly huge fanatics of "The Amazing Race" as well.

"We know the game," said Zabrina during the auditions. "We really know it. We watch it all the time. We take note of all the things that go wrong and right in the game."

And it looks as if they did a very good job taking notes, doing the right thing and avoiding the mistakes, since Zabrina and Joe Jer just made TV history by being the first ever all-female team to win the grand prize in the history of "The Amazing Race" franchise!

In the finale chosen on action and adventure channel AXN last Feb. 3, the last three teams standing—Zabrina and Joe Jer; Andrew Tjen and Steven Poh of Malaysia; and Sandy Sydney and Francesca von Haskel of Hong Kong—arrive full circle as they left Dubai and headed for Kuala Lumpur, which was also the start of the race, before darting to the last destination—Kuching, Malaysia. It was in Kuching where Zabrina and Joe Jer made their final sprint to the pit stop to overrun their title as winners of the first-ever "The Amazing Race Asia" and take home the US$100,000 prize.

After 15 cities in 30 days and traveling over 30,000 kilometers, an emotional Zabrina said: "Winning the race is great in so many ways—who can complain about the money?—and also we never in a million years thought we would be the first all-female team to win 'The Amazing Race.' We made history."

She added: "Joe Jer and I were in disbelief but we were also sad at the same time. We enjoyed the journey so much that it was sad to stop on that note, knowing it was going to be the last time."

And it's not only the viewers who were bowled over by the girls. Fans beat fellow Wu Tang warrior Ghostface Killah in the battle of the sexes to win the race. Not only because they would make history by becoming the first all-female team to ever win the race, but simply because they really beat the odds to be one of the final three teams. Also, they just outperformed the rest, including the tough-as-nails and "dirty" and the "eliminator."

In June 2005, we briefly had a chat with Joe Jer and we found out all about what she plans to do with the cash prize, why she doesn't get recognized even after winning and who she thought were good looking among all the contestants.

Did you actually think you'd win?

No, our main plan was to not get eliminated during every leg. Our total goal was to be the all-girl team standing last.

What do you think made you win?

We were smart. We thought logically. We didn't react irrational-ly.

What is one thing you guessed when you won?

You don't need a big team to push you. I have incredible support. I have loving family and friends.

Except for you guys, who deserved to win?

Andrew and Steve. They were the team to beat. They had everything going on for them.

Did you and Zabrina ever feel like giving up?

Not at all. We are stubborn by nature. Giving up was the last thing on our mind.

What's your advice to future contestants?

Just enjoy every moment of it.

Did you hear any bad comments about your female allure?

We played the game as underdogs and people have a thing for underdogs. We were nice to everyone.

Who were the biggest threats?

All of them were strong. Probably Andrew and Steven.

Who is the nicest competitor?

Steven is cute. Joey is cute.

But those are all girls! Name me a male contestant.

Andrew, he's handsome. My mother said AXN/CN

WINNING—'The Amazing Race Asia' is a life-changing experience for Zabrina Fernandez and Joe Jer Tee. "It has given me the confidence to believe that I am stronger than I think, that I have more willpower than I could possibly imagine," says Joe Jer.

HOST Allyn Wu says of the female duo: "They just stayed positive the entire time through think and dine."

GARFIELD — By JIM DAVIS

A. LIPIN — By JESS ABREN

BABY BLUES — By JERRY SCOTT

PUGAD BABOY — By PH. JUNIOR

NUTTS — By PATRICK MCDONNELL

LOVEBONITE — By ELIZABETH CHONGUE

ATOMO AND WEBBY — By LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY — By STEVEN MANLAPAZ

BIRD MACHINE — By HANAH ABREN

HANDOUSOME — By JOHNS TUDIO

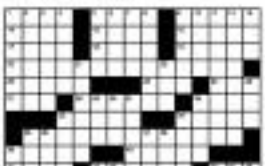
TULOON — By PAPI LAND TATUN PALAMBILING

BEH — By DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Bacon quantity
5 Lennon and Yoko
9 Consensus on building
14 Tropical lizard
15 Mr. Rochester's love
16 ___ Shack Bay, Bahamas getaway
17 Nuisance feature
18 Screen image
20 Brush up on current events?
22 Ditch diggers
24 Final degree
25 Cat Stevens
27 Accident agitation
28 Pill
30 Bird's nest
31 Pianist Liberace and Wall Street slang
34 "The Simpsons Comedy" area
35 Brush up on cleaning SHOT
37 Final Four games
40 Sharp, forward
41 Hand
42 Duke's assignment
44 Computer science
45 D. W. Griffith's
46 Hit the slopes
47 Nonsense poem
51 Brush up on cinematography
52 Pres. select
53 Strong wind
54 Mark Twain pseudonym
55 Fine kettle of fish

DOWN
1 Manger
2 Compliment
3 Chronological records
4 Sweet dreams
5 Fine screen



By Philip J. Anderson
PHYNDO.COM

6 "Dies ___"
7 Mountain man
8 Mississippi senator
9 Buffalo Bob of Dobbs
10 Boomerang, sudden
11 Tightly folded neck creases
12 Struggles for superiority
13 Painter's innovations
21 Turbo attachment
23 Cut-rate rate
26 Town's national
28 Prince Valiant's wife
29 Wages
31 "The Merry Widow" composer
32 Indy results
33 Will Rogers
36 Bit of something
38 Lawyer's speak
39 Un-Do-Wn
41 Andrew Lanham
43 Tic Tac Toe
45 PGA champion
47 Make do
48 Lock alike
49 Hole in barrel
50 Weight of Carlton Cubs
52 Connecticut ___ with us
54 Nonetype

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

THIS BOOK TODAY: You want to make the world a better place. Many of your days will be spent working with others to help them achieve their goals. There's a good judge of people. You raise family and home, and you shower your friends carefully. In late evening, you'll wrap up some projects and begin others. Your lucky day is Wednesday. Your lucky numbers are 6, 11, 15, 20, 24, 31, 36 and 42. Birthdate of: Dave Barry, 1958 BEP; Antonio Banderas, actor; Charlize Theron, actress.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

		2	5				8	6
	8					5		
1					8			
8					2			
4	5	1			7	2	6	
2			8		6			3
5			6		9			7
7			4		1			5
	9	8				4	1	

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	7	9	6	3	4	8	2	1
2	4	1	8	7	5	9	6	3
6	3	8	2	1	9	5	4	7
7	1	6	4	5	8	3	9	2
8	9	2	7	9	3	1	7	4
3	9	4	7	2	1	6	5	8
1	2	7	3	9	6	4	8	5
9	8	5	1	4	2	7	3	6
4	6	3	5	8	7	2	1	9

Win an iPod Nano for your loved one!

THE ERA OF mix tapes is over. This coming Valentine's Day, Apple and 24/7 want you to present your loved one with the gift of technology, music and romance—by filling any of the iPod incarnations with songs that speak of your relationship.

Apple will be giving away two silver 2-gig iPod nanos to two lucky 24/7 readers.

All you have to do is tell us about 10 songs that you will include in your beloved's playlist and why. Send your list to us along with a photo of

Skip the mix tape and load this baby up with the soundtrack to your love story

the two of you together. Creativity is always a plus. E-mail your entries to yourcallus@inquirer.com.ph along with your name, age, school/office and contact info.

Winning entries will be published in 24/7 in the next two weeks.

Deadline of entries is Feb. 11.

Almost winners

They were all set to win the competition but they crashed and burned on the last leg

By Miss Mark H. Sabitan
INQ7 Correspondent

PACING THREE-DON'T THAT SAY, BUT for "The Amazing Race Asia" contestants Andrew Tan, 25, and Symon Park, 26, it's really really bad.

After all, it seemed as if they were all set to win the competition. Their positioning was really good for the most part. Their fellow contestants also called the high-spirited girl-and-guy team "the team to beat." And, of course, they had a huge time advantage, running in first in the previous leg of the race. And, lo, they lost out at the most crucial hour trying to find their way in Kuching.

Despite being devastated by their loss, Inquirer now looks at their performance differently.

"It is a game that really plays with your mentality. If you keep winning every leg and come in first or second in every leg, you basically tend to become confident and there is a higher chance of being careless. We did really well all throughout the race and came first to the second last leg. Maybe if we did not come in first then, things could have been different. It is a game that requires 1/3 intelligence, 1/3 fitness and strength, and 1/3 luck."

Now that the race has ended, the two people has gone back to their normal lives. Malaysian-born Andrew is once again working as a managing director, while Symon—an Australian of Korean descent—is still busy as a business development manager.

Here's an excerpt of a phone conversation INQ7 had with the two Asian dance icons:

Are you still together?

Andrew Tan (AT): We're still together.

Aren't you guys going to get married soon?

AT: We don't have money to get married!

Symon Park (SP): Hahahahaha

Do other people try to ask you out on dates?

AT: We're together all the time so...

What's the most ridiculous scenario like?

AT: She's going to say Allan! I think it's obvious.

SP: Andrew was right about Allan Wu! Hah! Was quite rare.

Should boyfriend-girlfriend teams join?

SP: I think you have to go with someone very much like you.

Did you think you'd win?

AT: We were hoping to. It was disappointing when we didn't.

SP: He performed really well. We thought we'd win.

Did you ever feel like giving up?

AT: No.

SP: No way.

How are you better than family and frenemies?

AT: I don't think we're better.

What's the best lesson you learned from the competition?

AT: Always give 100 percent focus. We kind of broke down during the last leg.

SP: Never give up. Don't be overconfident.

E-mail the author at markashlee_28@yahoo.com

SYDNEY'S advice to future contestants: "Never give up. Don't be overconfident."

LOVE CONQUERS MALL

Celebrate Valentine's Day with your loved ones at the SM Mall of Asia!

LOVE IS IN THE AIR
Feb. 10, 2pm - 7pm / Music Hall

LOVAPALOOZA
Feb. 10, 6pm onwards / North Open Lot

THREE FOR LOVE! A VALENTINE CONCERT AT THE SM MALL OF ASIA
(Featuring the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra Chamber Ensemble, Mr. Blanko Cerrado, Ms. Karla Gutierrez & Ms. Ana Feleo)
Feb. 14, 7pm - 9pm / Seaside Boulevard

VALENTINES DAY PYROMUSICAL
Feb. 14, 9:30pm (immediately after the concert) / Seaside Boulevard

SM
MALL OF ASIA
No Other Mall Comes Close
SM Central Business Park, Bay City, Pasay City

Asian . . .

From page D1

he's over.

Is Allan Wu cute?

Of course! He can get away with anything.

What's next for you guys?

I want to continue traveling.

Are you famous in Malaysia?

Jakarta is more famous than me!

Did you discover something new about each other?

We started talking about our personal lives more.

Are there more guys who approach you now?

Not many people recognize me because I lost more weight. I looked worse on TV!

What do you plan to do with the cash prize that you got?

We don't plan. There's none more!

Great more of "The Amazing Race Asia"? Catch a special episode, "The Amazing Race Asia: Memories," on Feb. 8, 9 p.m.

E-mail the author at markashlee_28@yahoo.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

ENTERTAINMENT

Edsa Emerita G. Velarde

Edsa Bedtimes: inquirer.net/usernotes/edsa/homepage (VOICE (Globe) and 292 (Smart)) or email to edsa@..., entertainment@inquirer.com.ph Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment

Opening Today

Compound

Stars: John Arcilla, Jaclyn Reyes, Jojo Macaspac, Lisa Ortiz

Directed by Will Fredo

Violence and paranoia erupt in a "seemingly idyllic" compound after a double-cross (Arcilla) and his sidekick (Reyes) take two diamond broach (Macaspac). Described as a "sexy psychological thriller" by its film maker, Fredo's debut film premiered at the Cleveland International Film Festival last year where it was hailed as "perfectly unexpected ... not to be missed." Viva/Cinco of the Moviemen calls it "Mexican Pilars" as seen through the unflinching eyes of David Lynch and Mike de Leon. Tuesday to September Robinsons Galleria.

Curse of the Golden Flower

Stars: Chow Yun-fat, Gong Li, Jay Chou, Jin Chen

Directed by Zhang Yimou

Set in 10TH C during the Tang dynasty, this 126-min epic unveils the ruthless and vain Emperor (Chow) and his calculating empress (Gong). Assemble Zalaedo of New York Times comments: "[The director] achieves a kind of operatic delirium ... until the final, lacerating tragedy and bleak serenity so all but erased." Today! Another of the key words: "[It's] it's much stranger and more troubled film ... quasi-Shakespearean."

The History Boys

Stars: Stephen Campbell Moore, Samuel Barnett, Dominic Cooper, Samuel Anderson, James Corrden

Directed by Nicholas Hytner

Based on Alan Bennett's smash play, the 1980s romance drama focuses on eight Yorkshire students being primed for Oxford and Cambridge. Peter Travers of Rolling Stone raves: "[Although] the film can't match the stage original ... Hytner's unique sparkles and delivers satisfaction as it." "[It's an] exhilarantly free-spirited but faithful movie version ... deeply affectionate yet biting," Entertainment Weekly's Owen.

The Holiday

Stars: Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet, Jude Law, Jack Black

Directed by Nancy Meyers

Opposite-sex roots and romance challenged, two backwoods-like Diaz and Winslet find love while on vacation in London and Los Angeles. Claudia Puig of USA Today comments that it "doesn't feel cloyingly sweet ... despite its most sentimentality and fairy-tale premise." Walter Starr of San Francisco Chronicle calls it "the warmest rom-com movie since 'I Love Actually.' It crafters from sheers you definitely."

Hannibal Rising

Stars: Gaspard Ulliel, Gong Li, Rhys Ifans, Dominic West

Directed by Peter Webber

Based on Thomas Harris' novel "Behind the Mask," this prequel tracks the roots of Hannibal Lecter and answers the mysteries of the serial killer's madness. Rob Cline of Madness and the Walls.com says it's "good freak-out for genre fans ... [with] buckets of operatic grotesque, much of which is gorgeously and artistic ... [but] individual touches help make it the pretentious mess it is." Roger Ebert ... [but] Hannibal Rising is not impressive." "[The story] sounds like a missing-link novel, without the inventiveness of 'RED DRAGON' ... worse than 'Hannibal 3.'"

The Messengers

Stars: Kristen Stewart, Dylan McDermott, Penelope Ann Miller, John Corbett

Directed by Oxide Pang Chun and Danny Pang

The Thai auto filmmakers make their English-language debut with this American ghost thriller set in an isolated farm. Michael Rechtshaffen of "the Daily Journal" reports considers, "It's a bland ghost story ... surprisingly devoid of the creepy, claustrophobic atmospherics [in] the brothers' Asian work." Oscar Layne Nelson of Weekly says this film "delivers on some occasion ... also atmospheric and murdered cinematography augmented by a dark color palette."

Code Name: The Cleaner

Stars: Cedric the Entertainer, Lucy Liu, Mos Def, Nathan Lane, Mark Dacascos

Directed by Les Mayfield

A regular guy (Cedric) gets entangled in a government conspiracy and is pursued by spies and assassins. Wesley Morris of Boston Globe says: "As Mr. Cedric [is] clumsy ... another standard-issue bad action-comedy action vehicle." Kyle Smith of New York Post concurs: "The pacing is as slow as snow here [with] Sunshine pic could easily fit into a 90-minute TV show. It does have a few moments, thanks to the hatchet[.]"

UK critics pick Dench over Mirren

LONDON—(AFP/EE) (3/06) With honored Ian Holm Mirren was denied an Oscar at the 34th annual Evening Standard British Film Awards.

Craig, who starred Best Actor for "Casino Royale," his debut outing as super-spy James Bond. Craig, who has won lauds critical praise and box-office favor as the first blond Bond, is also up for the best Actor prize at next week's British Academy Film Awards.

Mirren, who is an Academy Award favorite for her turn as Queen Elizabeth II in "The Queen," lost the best actress prize to Judi Dench, awarded for her portrayal of a predatory schoolteacher in "Notes on a Scandal."

The best Film prize went to "United 93," Paul Greengrass' harrowing dramatic retelling of the final flight of one of the planes hijacked in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Peter Morgan won best Screenplay for two scripts—"The Queen" and "The Last King of Scotland."

Comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, creator of gauche Kazakh journalist Borat, won the Peter Sellers Award for Comedy.

Stephen Frears, director of "The Queen," received a special award "for making British film sweethearts around the world." The veteran director's socially conscious films include "My Beautiful Launderette," "Dangerous Liaisons" and "Every Penny Things."

The Evening Standard awards are sponsored by London's afternoon newspaper and selected by a jury of film critics. AP

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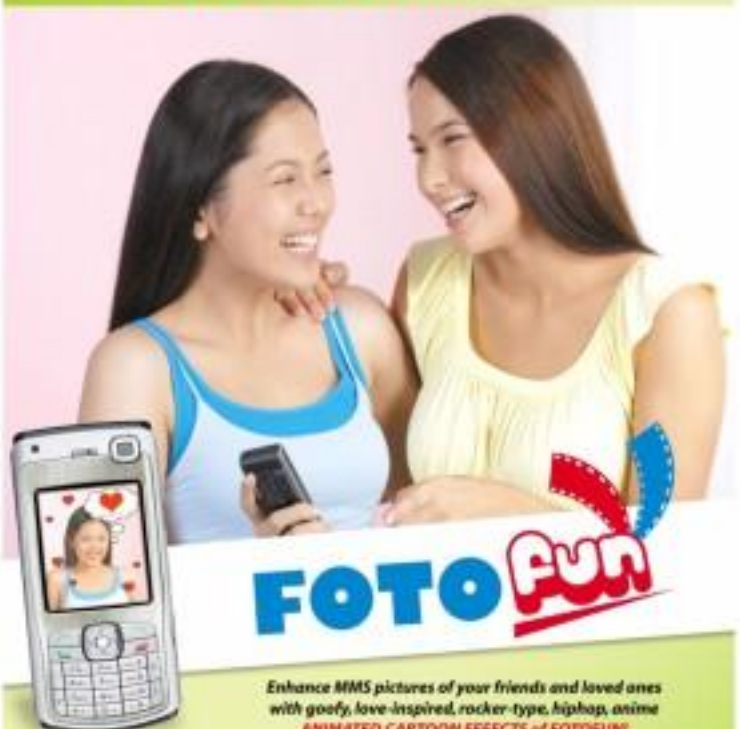

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10 BABEL
BLOOD and CHOCOLATE

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4 FRAGILE

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2 APOCALYPTO
3 THE MESSENGER
4 THE CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER

ANGELES

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2 APOCALYPTO
3 CHARLOTTE's WEB
4 THE CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER

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1 THE HOLIDAY
2 THE CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER
3 THE MESSENGER
4 APOCALYPTO
NIGHT at the MUSEUM

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2 THE MESSENGER
3 NIGHT at the MUSEUM
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5 AGENT 644
6 THE CURSE of the GOLDEN FLOWER

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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 AGENT 644
5 GRIFFIN and PHOENIX
6 TENACIOUS D

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Pilita set to launch song tilt

...for composers around the world

By Nini Valera

SHE HAS RECORDED 130 ALBUMS OF THE country's greatest hits, but singer Pilita Corrales is not quite done yet.

"I am now looking for a music partner," she told Inquirer Entertainment in an exclusive interview. "This is why I am launching my own songwriting contest."

PILITA World Song Competition, to be managed by Alhambra Productions Inc., is tapping into the vast pool of talent from around the world, according to the singer.

"I have received thousands of copies of original compositions from composers I have met during my travels throughout the years," said Corrales. "They want me to listen to their songs and possibly record them. So I thought of coming up with this contest to harness those talents through a panel of judges that would determine which songs should be recorded."

Her own lyrics

This is no ordinary songwriting tilt, she insisted.

Corrales has written lyrics for 11 songs—in English, Spanish and Filipino. "I am looking for two different melodies to match each of the lyrics," she said. "The lyrics could also be translated into any language as long as the essence of the original is maintained."

Amateur and professional songwriters are welcome to join, she added. There is no limit to the number of entries that a composer can send. A P500 fee will be charged for each local entry; $12 for each entry from abroad.

"People know what they pay for," Corrales explained. "That's why we're charging a fee."

Each song should not be more than five minutes long, she said. Melodies will be judged on originality, musicality and appeal.

"We won't reveal the name of the judges yet," Corrales said, "but they will [all be] musicians and award winners."

The chosen works will be included in a 12-song album under an international label by 2008 before the singer embarks on a world concert tour.

Tie-up with rappers

Gerrales' husband, Cadex Lopez, said he was working on a tie-up with local rappers to sponsor composers from their cities or towns.

"This way, we can extend the reach of the competition to the interior of the poor," Lopez said.

The mechanics of submissions have yet to be finalized pending the posting of the website for the competition.

Lopez said he wants the entries to be submitted online. The application form will also be posted on the website, along with other details.

Feedback

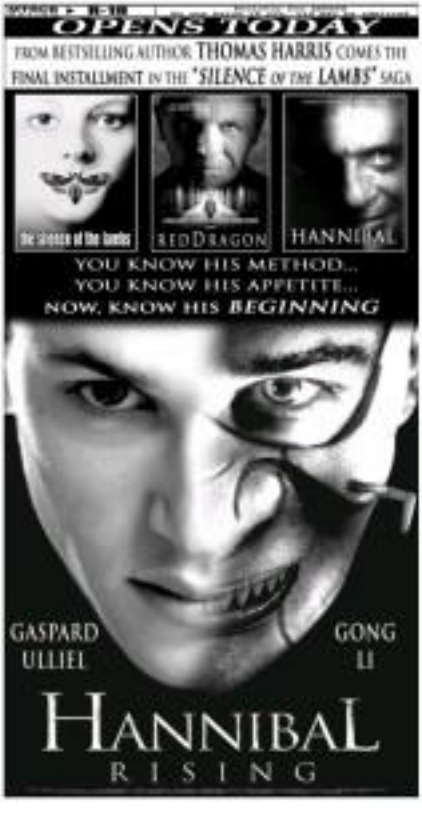
Hello Ronald Verallan [unreadable] ing [illegible] 12 Lorong Singapore 399004

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

It's very rare that fans the stars you didn't like the Kim-Gerald tandem (unfortunately for you, they are currently the most popular local movie love team) as attested by your columnist titled "Second Chance" and a previous one that interviewed the movie "Fire Ha High."

I admit that "Fire Ha High" didn't do well as expected (but it made enough money to be considered a hit or not, second chance) this as a "second chance") for the following reasons: 1) The onslaught of Typhoon "Milenyo", 2) Jhe and Gerald had to share the limelight with Maja Salvador, who's not as loved by the people as Kim and others where the positioning thought like.

I don't know if you have noticed (and I dare you to search your) [illegible] episode of "Maalaala Mo Kaya"). She doesn't need words to other lovely [illegible] expressions. She has very expressive eyes. Alam mo ba na unanimously ang kol-aldito ko when she performs because I know for sure that she will be one of the greatest actresses of all time!



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Ivy Violan

"Sing to Love," Feb. 14, Ayuntio Ballroom, Manila Peninsula. Call 810-2074 or 829-2877

Where you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

I spend quality time with my extended family—individual dinner at home, maybe even a babaroom game.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you've ever experienced?

It would have to be this coming Valentine's Day, during my concert...because I am spending it with and for someone who is so easy to love and so willing to love back.

What's an ideal Valentine's date?

For me, everyday is Valentine's Day—an ideal opportunity to live life to the fullest. Why share your love with one person on only one day, when you can do that with everyone you know everyday?

Who is your fantasy date?

Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio, Julio Iglesias—they have the intellect, personality and experience that make for an interesting evening of intelligent conversation. The fact that they look really good adds to the thrill factor!

What is the most romantic love song?

I love the romantic ballads of the '70s and '80s. Songs by Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, and Matt Monro express intense emotions that they manage to express so effortlessly.

IVY VIOLAN

HONEY ZUÑIGA

if you didn't have a show, who would you watch on Valentine's Day?

Alin Sunaryo Inverser or Mitch Valdes. I love their intelligent humor, sense of daring, and engaging personalities.

Why should we watch your show?

I will treat them to an unforgettable evening of music.

Honey Zuñiga

"The Love Concert," with Pho Silk Band, Feb. 13, 2007, Music Bar, Bias Ave., Q.C., 8:30 p.m.

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

I have a fabulous dinner with lots of desserts with my wife and kids. My family is very important to me.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you've ever experienced?

It would have to be the one I spent with my wife in Vienna, strolling in the biggest Rose Garden we had ever seen.

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Anywhere and anytime, as long as I am with my wife.

Who's your fantasy date?

Oprah or Hillary Clinton—both very interesting and intelligent women.

What's the most romantic love song?

"Never Ever Say Goodbye," a favorite in weddings and wedding anniversaries and, of course, Valentine shows.

If you never ever doing a show, who would you watch?

Earth, Wind and Fire, or the ageless Barbra Streisand.

Why should we watch your show?

If you want to fall in love again, watch the "Love Concert" Besides, by watching it, you will help a good cause—the scholarship program of Benny Librain 3788 for very poor and talented street/young school children.

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MARTIN Scorsese with presenter Steven Spielberg during Saturday's rites.

One step closer to his 1st Oscar

LOS ANGELES—DIRECTOR MOVIE MAKER Martin Scorsese took a major step toward winning his first Oscar on Saturday when he was named the Directors Guild of America's Best Film Director for 2007 for his thriller "The Departed."

After a black-tie audience at the Guild's awards dinner gave Scorsese a standing ovation, the director declared he was surprised by the award, which is often a forerunner to an Oscar.

Fifty-one of the last 57 DGA winners have gone on to win the Best Director Oscar and often their movies have won Best Picture awards as well.

Despite making such classic films as "Taxi Driver" and "Goodfellas," Scorsese has never won a Best Picture or Best Director Oscar.

"I was just trying to make a good picture [with 'Departed'], but to tell the audience, 'This is the first movie I have ever done with a gun.'"

Reuters

Young talents in the news

YOUTH HAS A HAND THAT making it and keeping it are equally as tough. Because it's so changed with "once it's ready" values and cynical positions. That's why it's breathing big to see some young talents either staying resilient, or bouncing back after a temporary setback.

The big winners this season in Metro Manila, the pert young star of "Little Miss Sunshine" critics has been nominated for an Oscar Best Supporting Actress.

Breslin fully deserves the nomination, because her performance propelled "Little Miss Sunshine" with the natural energy and freshness it needed to stay above its predestination, a cutesy movie.

Breslin's achievement is even more commendable because she was acting with exceptional adult actors like Alan Arkin and Steve Carell, and yet she was able to more than hold her own in her scenes with them.

Also at the top of her young game is the 22-year-old Dakota Fanning, who continues to star in top-quality and productions after another.

Fanning's latest movie is "Charlotte's Web," and she shows stellar cutlis talk, the love and the biggest as the Bookstore—Julie Andrews, Robert Redford, Oprah Winfrey.

On the other hand, forcing a being a hard time with her other two film, "Hounddog" in which she plays a rape victim. It's a big controversial change of pace for the young Brooklyn, and some people are criticizing Fanning and her handlers for accepting the "edgy" assignment so early in her career.

The same thing happened to Jodie Foster when she played a prostitute in Martin Scorsese's classic "Taxi Driver," and to Brooke Shields in a similarly daring role in "Pretty Baby." Happily, both young talents

were able to weather the early criticism and have remained acclaimed mainstream actors/actresses.

We trust that things will also turn out well for Fanning who matures the same depth and range of thespic talent that Foster and Shields' early performances intimated.

Finally, Fanner child star Lindsay Lohan has been experiencing more than her share of tribal trials of late. Now branded as a party girl and drunken driver, Lohan has decided to turn her life around by going into rehab.

This is a welcome move, as the fiercely sassy and bright-eyed star is too young to become a has-been due to her weakness in the seductive lure of the many available temptations of high-living Hollywood.

Lohan not take heart by recalling the action-comedy career of Drew Barrymore, who had even more demons to contend with and rub-doo, and yet was able to reestablish herself as an acclaimed film actor.

If Lohan sticks to her resolve, she can make it look up the ladder of stardom, and profit immensely from the tough lessons she's learned.

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Nick shows

A TWO-FOUR long search ashes of favorite Nick shows happens on Feb. 24.

Celebrating the Ren Mark and first wash are "My Life As A Teenage Robot" at 5:30 p.m., "Fitz Avinoff" at 6 p.m., "As Told By Ginger" at 6:30 p.m. and "The Fairly Odd Parents" at 7 p.m.

KID FIT

Kids' choice

LOS ANGELES—Grammy-winning singer Justin Timberlake will host Nickelodeon's 20th annual Kids' Choice Awards on March 31.

"It's exciting up to have at event bigger [than] than usual," said Timberlake, 27, who won the awards in 1999, 2003 and 2006.

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